A

Winter-Evening CONFERENCE

BETWEEN

NEIGHBOURS.

In Three Parts.

The Eleventh Edition, Corrected.

By *J. GOODMAN*, D. D.

PROV. XXVII. 17.

As Iron ſharpeneth Iron, ſo doth the Countenance of a Man his Friend.

LONDON:

Printed by *W. B.* for DAN. BROWN, A. CHURCHILL, J. KNAPTON, T. HORN, R. KNAPLOCK, J. WYAT, D. MIDWINTER, R. ROBINSON, W. TAYLOR, J. BOWYER, W. MEERS, R. GOSLING, W. & J. INNYS, B. COWSE. & J. BATEMAN. 1720.


G.R. III.

THE PUBLISHER TO THE READER.

Courteous Reader,

I *Muſt on the Behalf of the Perſons concern'd in theſe Papers now in thy Hands, beſpeak thy Candour in two or three Particulars following.*

Firſt, That thou wilt not ſuffer thy Curioſity to carry thee ſo far as to be very Inquiſitive who they were, or where they dwelt, who held theſe Conferences; for beſides that the Knowledge thereof would be of no Uſe, there are ſeveral other Reaſons why I cannot gratifie thee therein, farther than by giving their true

Characters, which thou wilt find ſubjoined.

Secondly, That whereas at the Entrance of theſe Conferences, and perhaps alſo, here and there in other Parts of them, thou mayeſt obſerve ſome ſhort Touches of Mirth, thou wilt not be offended at them, as ill comporting either with the Gravity of the Speakers, or the Serioufneſs of the Deſign. For if thou conſider the Humour of the Age, thou wilt not find thy ſelf obliged to impute it to the Levity of Sebaſtian's *Temper, but to his Diſcretion and Wiſdom, that he doth accommodate himſelf to thoſe he would gain upon; as he that would catch Fiſh, muſt ſuit his Baits to their Guſt and Fancy.*

Thirdly, Becauſe it is not unlikely but thou wilt take notice, that the Interlocutors do now and then, upon Occaſion, uſe complemental Attributions towards each other, and applaud one another's Wit or Eloquence; which being now put in Print, may to a ſevere Cenſor, ſeem to favour of Oſtentation, and look like clawing and flattering one another. Therefore

fore thou art desired to remember, that this was done only amongst themselves, and in private Conversation; where such kinds of Civility are usually practised, without Offence or Imputation.

As for the general Design of these Conferences, I make bold to tell thee, that it is apparently noble and generous; namely, to lead the Way to more manly Conversation, especially amongst the better Ranks of Men; to demonstrate, that the strictest Virtue is consistent with the greatest Prudence and Civility; and in short, to raise the dejected and depressed Spirit of Piety in the World. The Consideration hereof encourag'd the Publication, and I hope will sufficiently recommend it to thy Acceptance.

FAREWELL.

The Characters of the Persons in the Two following Conferences.

Sebastian, a Learned and Pious Gentleman, who takes all Advantages of engaging those he converses with, in Sobriety, and a sense of Religion.

Philander, a Genteel and Ingenious Person, but too much addicted to the Lightnesses of the Age, till reclaimed by the Conversation of *Sebastian*.

Biophilus, a Sceptical Person, who had no settled Belief of any Thing; but especially, was averse to the great Doctrines of Christianity, concerning the Immortality of the Soul, and the Life to come; and therefore, consequently, was much concerned for the present Life: Till at length awakened by the discreet Reasonings of *Sebastian*, and the affectionate Discourses of *Philander*, he begins to deliberate of what before he despised.

Eulabes, a truly Prudent and Holy Man, who made his Life a Study of, and Preparation for, Death; propounded as an Example for Imitation, in the Second Conference.

The Argument of the First Conference.

Sebastian *visiting his Neighbour* Philander, *after a little Time spent in civil Salutations, is quickly pressed by him to the too usual Entertainment of liberal Drinking; which* Sebastian *at first modestly and facetiously declines; but afterwards more directly shews the Folly and Unmanliness of it. He is then invited to Gaming; which he also excusing himself from, and giving his Reasons against,* Philander *complains of the Difficulty of spending Time without such Diversions. Whereupon* Sebastian *represents to him sundry Entertainments of Time, both more delightful, and more profitable, than the forementioned; amongst which, that of Friendly and Ingenuous Discourse: And from thence they are led on to debate about Religious Conference; the Usefulness, Easiness, Prudence and Gentility of which are largely demonstrated: Of which* Philander *being convinced, enquires the way of entring into it, of continuing and managing of it. In which being instructed by* Sebastian, *he resolves to put it in practice.*

The Argument of the Second Conference.

In the former Conference Sebaſtian *having convinced* Philander *of the great Importance of Religion, and the Wiſdom of making it as well the Subject of ſocial Communication, as of retired Meditations; accordingly, they two meet on purpoſe, this ſecond Time, to confer about it. But* Biophilus *a Sceptical Perſon, being in their Company, he at firſt diverts them from their Deſign, by other Diſcourſe; till, after a while, under the Diſguiſe of News, he is wheedled into this Subject before he was aware: And then he puts them upon the Proof of thoſe Principles, which they would have ſuppoſed. Upon this Occaſion the Foundations of Religion are ſearched into; and particularly, that great Point concerning* a Judgment to come, *is ſubſtantially proved: which being done, and* Biophilus *thereby rendered ſomewhat more inclinable to be ſerious, they then purſue their firſt Intention, and diſcourſe warmly and ſenſibly of another World, and of the neceſſary Preparations for it, ſo long till they not only inflame their own Hearts with Devotion, but ſtrike ſome Sparks of it into* Biophilus *alſo.*

A WINTER-EVENING CONFERENCE AT *Philander's* Houſe.

PART I.

Sebaſtian. A Good Evening to you, good *Philander*, I am glad to find you in Health, and I hope all your Family is ſo too.

Philander. I humbly thank you, Sir, we are all well, (God be praiſed) and the better to ſee you here; for I hope you come with Intentions to give us the diverſion of your good Company this long Evening.

Sebaſt. If that will do you any pleaſure, I am at your Service. For to deal plainly, I came with the reſolution to ſpend an Hour or two with you; provided, it be not unſeaſonable for your Occaſions, nor intrench upon any Buſineſs of your Family.

Phil. Buſineſs, Sir! At this time of the Year we are even weary with Reſt, and tired with having nothing to do.

Sebaſt. It is a time of Leiſure, I confeſs; the Earth reſts, and ſo do we; yet, I thank God, my time never lies upon my hands, for I can alway find ſomething or other to employ myſelf in. When the Fields lie dead, and admit of no Husbandry, I then can cultivate the little Garden of my own Soul; and when there is no Recreation abroad, I have a Company of honeſt old Fellows in Leathern Coats which find me Divertiſement at home.

Phil. I know the Company you mean, though I confeſs I have not much acquaintance with them; but do you not find it a melancholy thing to converſe with the dead?

Sebaſt. Why ſhould you ſay they are dead? No, they are immortal, they cannot die, they are all Soul, Reaſon without Paſſion, and Eloquence without Noiſe or Clamour. Indeed, they do not eat and drink, by which only Argument ſome Men now-a-days prove themſelves to be alive, as *Cyrus* proved the Divinity of his God *Bel*. But theſe are kept without coſt, and yet retain the ſame Countenance and Humour, and are always chearful and diverting. Beſides, they have this peculiar Quality, that a Man may have their Company, or lay them aſide at pleaſure, without Offence. Notwithſtanding, I muſt needs acknowledge, I prefer the Company of a good Neighbour before them; and particularly am well ſatisfy'd, that I cannot ſpend this Evening better than in your Converſation, and I am confident I ſhall ſleep well at Night, if firſt ſome friendly Offices paſs between us.

Phil. You doubly oblige me, good *Sebaſtian*, firſt in your great Condeſcenſion to make me this kind Viſit, and then in forſaking ſo good Company for mine.

Sebaſt. Your great Courteſy, *Philander*, interprets that to be an Obligation upon yourſelf, which is but Self-love in me: For truly I am ſenſible that

ſo

ſo great a part of the Comfort of Life depends upon a Man's good Correſpondence with thoſe that are near about him, that I think I cannot love myſelf, unleſs I love my Neighbour alſo. And now, Sir, if you pleaſe, let us upon this Occaſion improve our Neighbourhood to a more intimate Friendſhip; ſo that you and I, who have hitherto liv'd peaceably and inoffenſively by each other, may henceforth become mutually uſeful, and ſerviceable to one another.

Phil. O good *Sebaſtian*, you talk of Self-love; but I ſhall be ſo far from it, that I muſt hate myſelf, and that deſervedly too, if I lay not hold of ſo advantagious a Propoſal.

Sebaſt. Dear Neighbour, no Complements, I beſeech you; that will ſpoil our deſign, and continue us Strangers to each other.

Phil. If I were uſed to Complement, yet I ſhould be aſhamed to make ſo ſuperficial a return to an Overture of ſo much Kindneſs and Reality; but I am plain and hearty, and heartily I embrace both yourſelf and your motion.

Maid, make us a good Fire.

Come, Sir, what will you drink?

Sebaſt. All in good time, Sir.

Phil. Nay, never in better time; now is the ſeaſon of drinking; we muſt imitate the Plants, and now ſuck in Sap to ſerve us all the Year after: If you will flouriſh in the Spring, you muſt take in good Juices in the Winter.

Sebaſt. You ſeem, *Philander*, to dream of a dry Summer, however I'll pledge you, for I am ſure the Winter is cold.

Phil. Well, Sir, here is that will abate the edge of the Weather, be it as ſharp as it can. This Drink will make the Evenings warm, and the Nights ſhort, in ſpight of the Seaſon.

Sebaſt. That would be a pleaſant Experiment, but have you tryed it. *Phil.*

Phil. Yes, very often, *probatum eſt*; but then you muſt take the full Doſe. Come, fear it not, this will breed good Blood, cure Melancholy, and is the only Cement of good Neighbourhood.

The Tipling Humour of the Age expos'd.

Sebaſt. Why then I hope our Friendſhip will be laſting, for the Cement (as you call it) is ſtrong.

Phil. You are pleaſant, *Sebaſtian*: But now that you and I are together; and under the Roſe too (as they ſay) why ſhould not we drink ſomewhat briskly? We ſhall know one another and love one another the better ever after. For, let me tell you, this will open our Hearts, and turn our very Inſides outward.

Sebaſt. That Trick, *Philander*, I confeſs I have ſeen play'd, but I thought it a very unſeemly one.

Phil. I doubt you miſtake me, I mean only, that a liberal Glaſs will take off all Reſervedneſs in our Converſation.

Sebaſt. I underſtand you, good Neighbour; but with your Pardon, I muſt needs tell you, that I have never been able to obſerve the Glaſs you ſpeak of to be ſo exact a Mirrour of Minds, but as often to diſfigure and diſguiſe Men, as truly to repreſent them. Have you not found ſome Men, who upon an infuſion in ſtrong Liquor, have ſeem'd for the preſent to be totally diſſolved into Kindneſs and good Nature; and yet as ſoon as ever the drink is ſqueez'd out of theſe Sponges, they become again as dry, as hard, and as rough as a Pumice, and as intractable as ever. Others you ſhall obſerve to hector and ſwagger in their drink, as if they were of the higheſt Metal and moſt redoubted Courage, whoſe Spirits nevertheleſs evaporating with their Wine, they prove as tame errand Cowards as any are in Nature. Perhaps alſo you may have taken notice of a maudlin kind of Soakers, who commonly relent when they are well moiſtned, as if they ſhrunk in the wetting;

wetting; and will at ſuch times ſeem to be very devout and religious, and yet for all this they continue as ſottiſh as ever, as impenitent as a weeping Wall, and as inſenſible as the groaning plank. Contrariwiſe, there are ſome Men, who in the general habit of their Lives, appear to be very diſcreet and ingenuous Perſons; yet, if contrary to their Cuſtom, they have the misfortune to be ſurpriz'd with drink, they become as dull as Dormice, as flat and inſipid as Pompions.

I cannot think therefore that this Drink-Ordeal is ſo infallible a Teſt of Mens Tempers as you imagine; or if it were, yet there is no need of it between you and me: We can candidly and ſincerely lay open our Boſoms to each other, without having a Confeſſion of our Sentiments forced from us, by this new faſhioned *Dutch* Torture.

Phil. I muſt needs confeſs, *Sebaſtian*, that you raillé at Tipling with ſo good a grace, that I cannot be ſorry I gave you the Occaſion: But ſtill, I doubt, you miſtake me; I am not for ſcandalous and debauched Drinking, but in a civil way between Friends, to make our Spirits light and our Hearts chearful.

Sebaſt. And, good *Philander*, do not miſtake me; I am not of that moroſe Humour, to condemn all Chearfulneſs; neither do I take upon me to preſcribe to every Man his juſt Doſe, or think a Man muſt divide by an Hair, or be intemperate. I account good Wine as neceſſary as good Meat, and in ſome Caſes more neceſſary: Neither do I doubt but a Man may make uſe of it with a good deal of prudent Liberty; for I do not look upon the Fruit of the Vine, as the forbidden Fruit; or think ſo hardly of God Almighty, as if he gave us ſo good a Creature only to tempt and inſnare us. Yet, on the other ſide, I am perſuaded that a Man may love his Houſe, tho' he doth not ride upon the Ridge of

it;

it; and can by no means be of their Opinion, who fanſie, there is no Freedom but in a Debauch, no Sincerity without a Surfeit, or no Chearfulneſs whilſt Men are in their right Wits. And I look upon the very Conceit of this as reproachful both to God and Man; but the Practice of it, I am ſure is the Bane of all Manly Converſation.

Phil. I have known ſome Men oppoſe one Vice with another as bad or worſe; and who, whilſt they rail'd at Drinking, have, in effect, only made Apologies for Ill-nature: But you, *Sebaſtian*, tho' you ſpeak ſome very ſevere Things, yet attemper them with ſo much Humanity, that I feel a kind of Pleaſure, even then when you touch me to the quick; therefore you that have ſo much good Nature your ſelf, will, I preſume, make ſome allowances to Complaiſance in others.

Sebaſt. Far be it from me to undervalue good Nature, which I have in ſo great eſteem, that I ſcarcely think any thing is good without it: It is the very air of a good Mind, the ſign of a large and generous Soul, and the peculiar Soil on which Virtue proſpers. And as for that genuine Fruit of its Complaiſance, I take it (if it be rightly underſtood) to be that which above all things renders a Man both amiable and uſeful in the World, and which as well ſweetens as facilitates Converſation; but the miſchief is (as it generally happens to all excellent things) there is a Counterfeit which (aſſuming the name) paſſes current for it in the World, by which Men become impotent and incapable of withſtanding any Importunities, be they never ſo unreaſonable, or reſiſting any Temptations be they never ſo dangerous; but as if they were crippled in their Powers, or crazed in their Minds, are wholly governed by Example, and ſneakingly conform themſelves to other Mens Humours and Vices;

Of good Nature and Complaiſance.

and, in a word, become every Man's Fool that hath the confidence to impoſe upon them. Now this is ſo far from that lovely maſculine Temper of true Complaiſance, that it is indeed no better than a childiſh Baſhfulneſs, a feeble Puſillanimity, and ſilly Softneſs of Mind, which makes a Man firſt the Slave and Property, and then at laſt the Scorn of his Company. Wherefore it is the part of a good natured Man, neither ſo rigidly to inſiſt upon the punctilio's of his Liberty or Property, as to refuſe a Glaſs recommended to him by Civility; nor yet on the other ſide, to be either hectored or wheedled out of his Chriſtian-Name (as we ſay) and ſheepiſhly ſubmit himſelf to be taxed in his Drink, or other indifferent things at other Mens Pleaſure. And if he ſhall fall into the Company of thoſe who ſhall aſſume to themſelves ſuch an arbitrary Power, as to aſſeſs him at their own rate, and preſcribe their meaſures to him, I do not doubt but that with a *ſalvo* both to good Nature and Civility, he may and ought ſo far to aſſert his own Dominion over himſelf, as with a generous diſdain to reject the Impoſition, and look upon the Impoſers as equally tyrannical and impertinent with thoſe who would preſcribe to me to eat their proportions of Meat, or to wear my Clothes juſt of their Size.

Phil. O Sir, your Diſcourſe is brave, and wiſe, and virtuous, but one thing is wanting to make me your Proſelyte; which is, that I doubt it is not practicable; you cannot certainly but be ſenſible how difficult a thing it is for Modeſty and good Nature to oppoſe the prevailing Humour of the Age, which, in plain truth is ſuch, that now-a-days a Man looks very odly that keeps any ſtrict meaſures of drinking.

Sebaſt. I am afraid it is too true which you ſay; and though I have no mind to reproach, or much

leſs

leſs quarrel with the Age we live in; yet I confeſs to you, it is a matter of Regret and Diſdain to me to obſerve Skill in good Liquors ambitiouſly pretended to, as if it were a very conſiderable Point of Knowledge; and good Drinking look'd upon as ſo important an Affair of humane Life, that *that* time ſeems to be loſt, in which the Glaſs goes not round, and the Cup and the Bottle ſeem to be the Hour-glaſs or the only meaſure of Time. And this I the more wonder at, becauſe the Air, the Climate, the Conſtitutions of Mens Bodies are not changed, and the Laws of Temperance are the ſame they were wont to be: And beſides all this I do ingenuouſly acknowledge the Age to be extraordinarily polite and ingenious; I would therefore very fain know, but have not hitherto been able to ſatisfie my ſelf, from what Cauſes this change of Mens Manners in in this particular hath ariſen, and what hath brought this tipling Humour into Faſhion.

Apologies for Tipling baffled.

Phil. You need not ask my Opinion, for you have anſwered your ſelf; it is a Faſhion, and that you know is changeable without obſervable Cauſes; but becauſe, perhaps you think my unhappy experience may enable me to ſay ſomething in the caſe, I will tell you. Faſhions, you know, are commonly taken up for diſtinction ſake; for Men do not love to appear in the Garb of thoſe whom they hate or deſpiſe. Now there are a melancholy ſort of People amongſt us that are wonderfully preciſe in their way; Men of a kind of *Leſſian* Conſcience, that pretend to do all things by meaſure, and indeed weigh every thing by Scruples, and conſequently (whatever they are towards themſelves) are very ſevere in their Cenſures of other Men; inſomuch that whatſoever is not juſt after their Mode and Humour, eſpecially if it look never ſo little airy and light, they preſently damn it, as flat Immorality

morality and Debauchery. These Men (however some of them may be well meaning and pitiable) you will easily grant must needs be very troublesome in the World. But then there is another sort of Men, who being of a more sanguine and chearful Temper, are not so straitlaced in their Principles, and consequently are apt to indulge themselves a far greater Liberty of Conversation; and in Detestation of the former whom they observe to be often absurd and unreasonable, but always hide-bound and phantastical, do (as it is too usual in such cases) run out upon some extremity on the other Side; and so, in short, it seems to me, that unnecessary Scrupulosity hath given occasion and countenance to its direct contrary; and thus that tipling Humour, as you call it, hath become the prevailing fashion.

Sebast. In truth, *Philander*, the account you have given is ingenious, and not improbable: But Lord, what a Misery is it that Men must always be upon extremes! is there no middle? Cannot Men be merry and wise too? Is there any necessity that every Man must be intoxicated one way or other? If one sort be silly, must the other be mad? Or if they be mad, must these be drunk? For my part, I cannot tell whether to call this Distinction (as you do) or Imitation, or Infection, or Fascination, or what you will; but sure I am, they are both very vicious and absurd.

Phil. Nay, *Sebastian*, I will not take upon me altogether to justify the Practice of the one more than the other; but now I am in, I will (with your leave) give you notice of another thing, that is thought to have a considerable stroke in this business, and may in some measure mitigate your Censure of the Good-Fellows. It is the Observation of wise Men, that generally the Customs of People were taken up at first,

upon the account of ſome natural Neceſſity or Defect (as we ſee generally Art ſupplies and perfects Nature.) Now you know we live in a cold Climate, and conſequently muſt needs have dull flegmatick Bodies, the influence of which upon our Minds is eaſily diſcernible (amongſt other inſtances) by that extreme Modeſty and Baſhfulneſs, which is almoſt equally common to us all, and peculiar to all that are of this Country, and which ordinarily tongue-ties us in all good Company, until Wine has warmed us, and diſſolved that Ligament; ſo that it ſhould ſeem that drinking is not altogether blame-worthy, as being more neceſſary to us, than to moſt other People, if it were but to make us ſprightly and converſable: For as on the one ſide, you cannot expect that all Men ſhould be able to converſe together, like a Company of dry Philoſophers; ſo on the other, I know you would not have *Engliſhmen*, when they are in Company hold a ſilent Quakerly Meeting.

Sebaſt. Now, *Philander*, you have mended the matter finely, to avoid my Cenſure of the Good-Fellows (as you call them) you have cenſured the whole Nation as a Generation of dull Sots: And repreſented your Countreymen as a ſort of People newly faſhioned out of Clay, and juſt able to ſtand upright, but into whom God Almighty hath put no Soul at all, but left that to be extracted out of the Spirit of Wine, by which means, when we have attained it (and not till then, it ſeems) we may become like other Folks. But in the mean time, I wonder what became of all our Sober Anceſtors, and particularly of the dry Race of Queen *Elizabeth-men* (as they are called.) I cannot find but they had as much Soul and Spirit as the preſent Generation (however they came by it) tho' they never made Alembicks of themſelves. But in earneſt, *Philander*, I will confeſs ingenuouſly

to

to you, that as for ſuch a dull ſort of earthly Men as you ſpeak of, I ſhould not be much offended with them; if they now and then got a little Froth into their Heads, to ſupply their Defect of Brains; and if upon that occaſion they grew ſomewhat conceited and impertinent, the matter were not much, though the *Metamorphoſis* might ſeem ſtrange, for a dull Aſs to become an Ape or a Monkey: But then for the ſame reaſon the finer Wits (and ſurely ſome ſuch there be) ſhould let it alone; for that rational and ingenious Men ſhould by this Cup of *Circe*, the magical Power of Wine, be transformed into ſuch kind of Animals, methinks it is a thouſand pities. But why do you ſmile, *Philander?*

Phil. Even at my ſelf, good *Sebaſtian*, or at leaſt at that Picture you have drawn for me; it would look a little ambitiouſly if I ſhould compare my ſelf to the Land of *Ægypt*, which, they ſay, was fruitful in proportion to its being overflown; but in plain truth, I am ſuch a ſpot of Earth, as will bear nothing unleſs it be well watered; and to countenance my ſelf in this condition, tho' I cannot pretend to Learning, yet I remember I have heard, that the graveſt Philoſophers did uſe to water their Plants (as we ſay) and ſometimes philoſophized over a Glaſs of Wine.

Sebaſt. And why not over a Glaſs of Wine, as well as by a Fire-ſide? Provided a Man take care, that as by the one he does not burn his Shins, ſo by the other he doth not over-heat his Head; or to follow your Metaphor, provided a Man only water the Soil, and do not drown it. You know it is only Extremes that I find fault with, when Men will be always ſipping and dabling, as if their Bodies were nothing but Pipes made on purpoſe to tranſmit Liquors through; or as if

they had their Life and Soul transfus'd into them from the Hogſhead.

Phil. Well, Sir, I perceive I am likely to get nothing by my fine figure; I will therefore ſay no more of my ſelf; but I have heard ſome others ſay, they have always found their Reaſon to be ſtrongeſt, when their Spirits were moſt exalted.

Sebaſt. But ſure they did not mean that their Reaſon was ſtrongeſt, when the Wine was too ſtrong for them? If they did, then either their Reaſon was very ſmall at the beſt, and nothing ſo ſtrong as their Drink, or elſe we are quite miſtaken in the Names of things; and ſo in plain *Engliſh*, Drunkenneſs is Sobriety, and Sobriety Drunkenneſs: For who can imagine, that *that* which clouds the Head, ſhould enlighten the Mind; and that which wildly agitates the Spirits, ſhould ſtrengthen the Underſtanding; or that a coherent thread of Diſcourſe, ſhould be ſpun by a ſhatter'd vertiginous brain? It is poſſible ſome odd Crotchets and Whimſeys may at ſuch times be raiſed together with the Fumes; or it is not unlikely, but that a Man may then ſeem wondrous wiſe in his own Eyes, when he ſhall appear very ſilly and ridiculous to all others that are not in the ſame Condition with himſelf; but to go about to make any thing better of it, is a kind of liquid Enthuſiaſm. And that this is no wild Conjecture or uncharitable Opinion of mine, I appeal to this Experiment; tell me, good *Philander*, what is the Reaſon that Men in thoſe Jollities (we ſpeak of) cannot endure the Company of thoſe that will not take their ſhare with them, but are moſt pleaſed with ſuch as will rather exceed their meaſure, and take off their Cups roundly; is it, think you, out of deſire that ſuch Men ſhould be wiſer than themſelves, or the quite contrary? Or what is the

Reaſon

Reaſon that Men of this Practice are very ſhy of thoſe Perſons that will remember and repeat afterwards the Paſſages in thoſe merry Aſſignations? I make no doubt, but when you have conſider'd the Caſe, you will find this to lie at the bottom; namely, that even ſuch Perſons are ſenſible that ſeveral things paſs amongſt them at ſuch times for Wit and good Humour; which when they hear of again, and reflect upon in their ſober Intervals, they are heartily aſhamed of, as apiſh and ridiculous Fooleries.

But now, if (after all) I ſhould grant you (which I do not unwillingly) that Men well whetted with Wine (as they love to ſpeak) are very ſharp and piquant, very jocoſe and ready at a Repartee, or ſuch like; yet beſides that, this Edge is ſo thin and Razor-like, that it will ſerve to no manly Purpoſes; yet it is alſo very dangerous, ſince at that time a wiſe Man hath it not in keeping.

Phil. Well, I perceive hitherto the Edge of my Arguments turns at the force of your Replies; therefore I had beſt contend no longer with you on that Point, whether Wine raiſes Mens Parts, or no: But one thing I have yet to ſay, which I am ſure you muſt and will grant me, *viz.* that it ſuppreſſes Cares and Melancholy, and makes a Man forget his Sorrows, (that great Diſeaſe of human Life) and this, I ſuppoſe, ſufficiently commends the liberal uſe of it.

Sebaſt. That which you now ſay is undeniably true; and no queſtion, for this very End was the Juice of the Grape principally ordained by the great Creator of the World; but yet I know not how it comes to paſs, that this Remedy is ſeldomeſt made uſe of by thoſe to whom it was peculiarly preſcrib'd; I mean, the melancholy and dejected have ordinarily the leaſt ſhare of it: But it is very commonly taken by the proſperous, the

ſanguine, and debonair, and ſuch as have leaſt need of it; and theſe frequently take it in ſuch large Proportions, that it makes them not only forget their Sorrows, (if they had any) but themſelves and their Buſineſs too. So that, upon the whole matter, I ſee no tolerable account can be given of the way of drinking now in faſhion; for it appears to have been taken up upon no Neceſſity; it is recommended by no real Advantage either to the Body or Mind, and therefore muſt owe its Riſe to no better Cauſes than Dulneſs or Idleneſs, a ſilly Obſequiouſneſs to other Mens Humours, or Epicuriſm and Wantonneſs of our own Inclination. And for the Habit of it, it is no better than a lewd Artifice to avoid thinking; a way for a Man to get ſhut of himſelf, and of all ſober Conſiderations.

The real Cauſes of Tipling intimated, and the miſchiefs of it exaggerated.

It fills Men with more Spirits than it leaves them able to govern; from whence they become great Talkers, proud Boaſters, capricious, inſolent and quarrelſome. For it ſo much dilates and rarifies the Spirits, that they cannot bear up a weighty Thought; and while ſuch as thoſe are ſunk and drowned, nothing but the mere Froth and Folly of Men's Hearts bubbles up in their Converſation. And this inſenſibly growing upon Men, by degrees introduces an habitual Vanity and Impertinence, below the Gravity and Dignity of humane Nature; and by means of which ſuch Men become fit only for Toys and Trifles, for apiſh Tricks and buffoonly Diſcourſe; which in Concluſion do ſo far degrade a Man below his Quality, that he becomes not only a Shame to himſelf and his Family, but the Contempt of his very Servants and Dependents.

And, touching this laſt, have you not ſometime obſerved, what dry Bobs and ſarcaſtical Jeers the moſt

moſt underling Fellows will now and then beſtow upon their Betters, when they have found them faultering in this kind: *Was not Maſter ſuch a one cruelly cut laſt Night*; ſays one. *How like a drowned Rat was Maſter ſuch a one?* ſays another. *How wiſely our Maſter looks when he hath got his Doſe?* ſays a third.

Shall I need after all this, to repreſent the Sin committed againſt God Almighty, by this vain Cuſtom, in the Breach of his Laws, deforming his Image, and quenching his Spirit; or the Injury it doth to humane Society, in the riotous and profuſe Expence of ſo comfortable a Cordial and Support of humane Life; or ſhall I but reckon up the Miſchiefs a Man hereby incurs to his own Perſon, the Danger of his Health, the Damage to his Fortunes, the———

Phil. O, no more, no more, good *Sebaſtian*; I am yours; you have ſilenc'd, you have vanquiſh'd me; I am not able to reſiſt the Evidence of Truth in your Diſcourſe, you have quite marr'd a good Fellow, and ſpoil'd my drinking.

But how then ſhall I treat you? Come you are for ſerious Things, what ſay you to a Game at Tables? Methinks that is both a grave and a pleaſant Entertainment of the time.

Sebaſt. Truly, Sir, I am ſo unskilful at that and moſt other Games, that I ſhould rather give you Trouble than Diverſion at it. But what need you be ſolicitous for my Entertainment; it is your Company only which I deſire? And methinks it looks as if Friends were weary one of the other, when they fall to Gaming.

Of Gaming and particularly of Chance Games.

Phil. But I ſhould think a Man of your Temper might have a Fancy for this Game, as upon other Reſpects, ſo eſpecially becauſe it ſeems to be a pretty Emblem of the World.

Sebaſt. As how, I pray you, Sir?

Phil. Why, in the firſt Place, the caſual agitation of the Dice in the Box, which unaccountably produceth ſuch or ſuch a Lot, ſeems to me to repreſent the Diſpoſal of that inviſible Hand which orders the Fortunes of Men. And then the dextrous Management of that Lot or Caſt by the Gameſter, plainly reſembles the Uſe and Efficacy of humane Prudence and Induſtry in the Conduct of a Man's own Fortunes.

Sebaſt. I perceive, *Philander*, that you play like a Philoſopher, as well as a Gameſter; but, in my opinion, you have forgotten the main Reſemblance of all; which is, that the Clatter and Noiſe in toſſing and tumbling the Dice and Table-men up and down, backward and forward, lively deſcribes the Hurry and Tumult of this World, where one Man goes up and another tumbles down; one is dignified and preferred, another is degraded; that Man reigns and triumphs, this Man frets and vexes; the one laughs, the other repines; and all the reſt tug and ſcuffle to make their Advantage of one another. Let this, if you pleaſe, be added to the Moral of your Game. But when all is done, I muſt tell you, for my part, I am not ſo much taken with the Original, as to be fond of the Type or Effigies; I mean I am not ſo in love with the World, as to take any great Delight in ſeeing it brought upon the Stage, and acted over again: But had much rather retreat from it, when I can, and give my ſelf the Contentment of Repoſe, and quiet Thoughts.

Phil. However, I hope you are not offended at my mention of that Game. Do you think it unlawful to uſe ſuch Diverſion?

Sebaſt. No dear *Phil.* I am not of that auſtere Humour, to forbid delightful Exerciſes; for I am ſenſible that whilſt Men dwell in Bodies, it is fit they

they not only keep them up in neceſſary Reparation by Meat and Drink, but alſo make them as lightſome and chearful as they can, otherwiſe the Mind will have but an uncomfortable Tenancy. The animal Life, I ſay, muſt be conſidered as well as the intellectual, and our Spirits have need to be relaxed ſometimes, leſt the keeping them continually intent, weaken and infeeble them ſo, that they cannot ſerve us in greater Purpoſes: I would therefore as ſoon univerſally forbid all Phyſick, as all Kinds of Exerciſe and Diverſion; and indeed rather of the two, for I think the latter may in a great meaſure ſave the trouble of the former, but that will do little or no Good without this.

Neither do I think even thoſe Games of Chance abſolutely unlawful; I have ſometimes made uſe of this in particular which you mention, or the like to it, upon ſome occaſions: As for inſtance, when I took Phyſick, and could neither be allowed to walk abroad, nor to be ſerious and thoughtful within Doors; I have ſupplied both, for that time, with a Game at Tables: Or, it may be, when I have happened to be engaged in ſome kind of Company, I have play'd not ſo much to divert my ſelf with the Game, as to divert the Company from ſomething that was worſe. But to deal freely with you: Though I do not altogether condemn, yet I cannot very much commend theſe Kind of Sports; for indeed, I ſcarce think them Sports, they are rather a counterfeit kind of Buſineſs, and weary one's Head as much as real Study and Buſineſs of Importance. So that in the uſe of them a Man only puts a Cheat upon himſelf, and tickles himſelf to Death; for by applying himſelf for Delight to theſe buſie and thoughtful Games, he becomes like a Candle lighted at both Ends, and muſt needs be quickly waſted away between jeſt and earneſt, when

when as both his Cares and his Delight prey upon him.

Beſides, I obſerve, that Diverſions of this nature having ſo much of Chance and Surprize in them, do generally too much raiſe the Paſſions of Men, which it were fitter by all Arts and Endeavours to charm down and ſuppreſs. For, to ſay nothing of the uſual Accidents of common Gaming-Houſes, which (as I have heard from thoſe that knew too well) are the moſt lively Pictures of Hell upon Earth; and where it is ordinary for Men to rave, ſwear, curſe and blaſpheme, as if the Devil was indeed amongſt them, or the Men were transform'd into infernal Spirits. I have ſeen ſad Examples of Extravagance in the more modeſt and private, but over-eager Purſuits of theſe Recreations: Inſomuch that ſometimes a well-temper'd Perſon hath quite loſt all Command of himſelf at them: So that you might ſee his Eyes fiery, his Colour inflamed, his Hands to tremble, his Breath to be ſhort, his Accents of Speech fierce and violent; by all which, and abundance more ill-favour'd Symptoms, you might conclude his Heart hot, and his Thoughts ſolicitous, and indeed the whole Man, Body and Soul, to be in an Agony. Now will you call this a Recreation, or a Rack and Torture rather? A Rack certainly, which makes a Man betray thoſe Follies which every wiſe Man ſeeks to conceal, and heightens thoſe Paſſions which every good Man endeavours to ſubdue.

And, which is yet worſe (as I was ſaying) this Courſe looks like the accuſtoming of the Beaſt to be rampant, and to run without the Rein: For by indulging our Paſſions in jeſt, we get an habit of them in earneſt, and accordingly ſhall find our ſelves to be inclined to be wrathful, peeviſh, and clamorous, when we apply our ſelves to Buſineſs, or more grave Converſation.

To

To all which we add, that Gaming (and eſpecially at ſuch Games as we are ſpeaking of) doth inſenſibly ſteal away too much of our time from better Buſineſs, and tempts us to be Prodigals and Bankrupts of that which no good Fortune can ever redeem or repair. And this is ſo notoriouſly true, that there is hardly any Man who ſets himſelf down to theſe Paſtimes (as they are called) that can break off and recall himſelf when he deſigned ſo to do. Foraſmuch as either by the too great intention of his Mind, he forgets himſelf; or the Anger ſtirred up by his Misfortunes, and the Indignation to go off baffled, ſuffers him not to think of any thing but Revenge and Reparation of his Loſſes, or the Hopes he is fed withal trowls him on, or ſome Witchery or other tranſports him ſo beſides his firſt Reſolutions, that Buſineſs, Health, Family, Friends, and even the Worſhip of God itſelf, are all ſuperſeded and neglected for the ſake of this paltry Game.

All which conſider'd, I am really afraid there is more of the Devil in it than we are ordinarily aware of, and that is a temptation of his to engage us in, that, where he that wins moſt is ſure to looſe that which is infinitely of more value. Therefore upon the whole Matter, I think it much ſafer to keep out of the Liſts, than to engage; where beſides the greatneſs of the Stake, a Man cannot bring himſelf off again without ſo great difficulty.

Pardon me, dear *Philander*, if my Zeal or Indignation (or what you will call it) hath tranſported me in this particular; ſure I am, I have no Intention to reproach your Practice, nor to affront you for your motioning this Sport to me, but ſpeak out of hearty Good-Will, and to give you caution.

Phil. O *Sebaſtian!* I love you dearly, and thank you heartily for the Freedom you have uſed with me. We good-natur'd Men (as the World flat-

ters

ters us, and we love to be ſtyled) conſidering little or nothing our ſelves, and having ſeldom the Happineſs of diſcreet and faithful Friends that will have ſo much concern for us as to admoniſh us of our Imprudences and our Dangers, as if we were mere Machines, move juſt as other Men move and prompt us, and ſo drink, play, and do a thouſand Follies for Companies ſake, and under the countenance of one another's Example: God forgive me, I have too often been an inſtance of that which you now intimated: I therefore again and again thank you for your Advice, and hope I ſhall remember as long as I live what you have ſaid on this occaſion.

But that you may work a perfect Cure upon me, I will be ſo true to my ſelf as to acquaint you faithfully with what I apprehend to be the cauſe of this epidemical Diſtemper. I find the com-

Want of Buſineſs the Occaſion of Drinking and Gaming.

mon and moſt irreſiſtible Temptation both to Drinking and Gaming is the Unskilfulneſs of ſuch Men as my ſelf to employ our Time without ſuch kind of Diverſions, eſpecially at this Seaſon of the Year, when the dark and long Evenings, foul Ways and ſharp Weather drive us into Clubs and Combinations: If therefore you will deal freely and friendly with me herein, and by your Prudence help me over this difficulty, you will exceedingly oblige me, and do an Act worthy of your ſelf, and of that Kindneſs which brought you hither.

Sebaſt. There is nothing, dear *Phil.* within my Power which you may not command me in. Nor is there any thing wherein I had rather ſerve you (if I could) than in a Buſineſs of this nature. But all I can do, and as I think all that is needful in this caſe, is, to deſire you to conſider on it again, and then I hope you will find the difficulty

not

not ſo inſuperable as you imagine. It is very true Idleneſs is more painful than hard Labour, and nothing is more wearisome than having nothing to do: Beſides, as a rich Soil will be ſure to bring forth Weeds if it be not ſowed with more profitable Seed; ſo the active Spirits in Man will be ſure to prompt him to Evil, if they be not employed in doing Good: For the Mind can no more bear a perfect Ceſſation and Intermiſſion than the World a *Vacuum*.

But this difficulty which you repreſent, generally preſſes young Men only: Theſe indeed having more Sail than Ballaſt; I mean, having a mighty Vigour and abundance of Spirits, but not their Minds furniſhed with a ſufficient Stock of Knowledge and Experience to govern and employ thoſe active Spirits upon; no wonder if ſuch Perſons, rather than do juſt nothing and in Defect of real Buſineſs, do greedily catch at thoſe Shadows and Reſemblances of it, as I remember you ingeniouſly call'd Drinking and Gaming. Beſides, theſe ſort of Perſons ſeeming to themſelves to have a great deal of time before them, are eaſily drawn to ſpend it the more laviſhly, as out of an unmeaſurable Store. But what's all this to Men that are enter'd into real Buſineſs, and have Concerns under their Hand, and the Luxuriancy of whoſe Spirits is taken off by Cares and Experience, and eſpecially who cannot (without unpardonable Stupidity) but be ſenſible how daily the Time and Age of Man wears away. Now, I ſay, why Time ſhould be ſo burthenſome to ſuch as theſe, or what ſhould betray them to ſuch infrugal Expences of it, I profeſs, for my part, I can give no Account without making ſevere Reflexions on their Diſcretion.

Phil. Aſſign what Cauſes of it you can, or make what Reflexions upon it you pleaſe, how-

ever the matter of Fact is certainly true in the general, that a Gentleman's Time is his Burthen, (whether he be young or old) and the want of Employment for it, his great Temptation to ſeveral Extravagancies.

A Gentleman's Life as buſy as other Mens.

Sebaſt. I muſt believe it to be as you ſay, becauſe you know the World better than I do, and I am confident you will not miſreport it. But really, *Phil.* it is very ſtrange it ſhould be ſo, and I am ſure cannot be verified without very ingrateful Returns to the divine Bounty, which hath made ſo liberal and ample Proviſions for the Delight and Contentment of ſuch Perſons far above the Rate of others. It is true, they have leſs bodily Labour, and no Drudgery to exhauſt their Time and Spirits upon, (and that methinks ſhould be no Grievance) but then the prudent Management of a plentiful Fortune (if things be rightly conſidered) doth not take up much leſs time than the poor Man's Labour for Neceſſities of Life. For what with ſecuring the Patrimony, and husbanding the Revenue, what with letting and ſetting his Lands, and building and repairing his Houſes, what with planting Walks, and beautifying his Gardens, what with accommodating himſelf according to his Quality, and hoſpitably treating his Friends and Neighbours according to theirs, and, to ſay no more, what with keeping Accounts of all this, and governing a numerous and well-fed Family, I am of Opinion, that (all this taken together) the Gentleman hath indeed the more pleaſant, but a no leſs buſie Employment of his time than other Men: Inſomuch, that I cannot but ſuſpect, that he muſt be deficient in ſome principal Branch of good Husbandry, and defrauds his Buſineſs, that furfeits on Leiſure.

Moreover

Moreover, as divine Bounty hath exempted ſuch Men as we ſpeak of from the common Sweat and Anxieties of Life, by thoſe large Patrimonies his Providence and the Care of Parents hath provided to their Hands; ſo the ſame divine Majeſty hath thereby obliged them, and it is accordingly expected from them by the World, that they be more publickly ſerviceable to their Prince and Countrey, in Magiſtracy, in making Peace, and ſeveral Ways aſſiſting Government, and promoting the Ends of humane Society: Upon which account, as it is very unjuſt that others ſhould envy and malign them for their Enjoyments, ſo it is apparent alſo, that they are ſo far from having leſs to do, than their Inferiors, that, on the contrary, the Gentleman's Life ſeems to be far the buſier of the two.

Beſides all this, Gentlemen having uſually more ingenious Education, and conſequently are preſumed to have more exerciſed and improved Minds, may therefore be able to employ themſelves if all other Buſineſs ceaſed, and fill up the vacant Spaces of their time with ſuch delightful and profitable Entertainment as others are incapable of.

Phil. That, Sir, that laſt Point is the thing I would fain learn, namely, how to fill up the vacant Spaces of Life (as you call it) ſo as to leave no room for Temptation to Debauchery.

Sebaſt. I am heartily glad to ſee you of that Mind; but I aſſure my ſelf there is nothing I can ſay to it, but what your own Diſcretion will prevent me in. However, if it be your Deſire that I ſhould enlighten your Thoughts by opening of my own, we will then, if you pleaſe, examine this matter between us, and by that time we have compared the Period of our Lives with the variety of Buſineſs that occurs in it, I am out of all doubt that you

An Eſtimate or Account of the Time and Buſineſs of Man's Life.

will be then ſatisfied, that we have neither ſo much Time as to be a burthen to us, nor if it were more than it is, ſhould we be at a Loſs for the beſtowing of it. And this, without reſorting to any of the Extravagancies aforementioned.

Let us then, in the firſt Place, ſuppoſe that the Lives of Men at this Age of the World, and particularly in this Climate and Countrey, amount commonly to ſeventy Years; for though it is poſſible here and there one out-lives that Term, yet it is pretty evident, by the moſt probable Calculations, that there is not above one Man in thirty, or thereabouts, who arrives at that Age: However, I ſay, let us at preſent ſuppoſe that to be the common Standard.

Now to diſcover what an inconſiderable Duration this is, let us but ask the Opinion of thoſe that have arrived at it, and they will aſſuredly tell us, that all the whole Term when it is paſt, ſeems to be a very ſhort Stage, and quickly run over; or if we had rather truſt to our own Experience, let us look back upon twenty or thirty Years of our own Lives, which though it bear a very great Proportion towards the Leaſe of our whole Lives, yet when it is over, ſeems to be but a little while to us, and that Time, as it is uſually pictured, fled upon Wings———

Phil. I pray pardon me, if I a little interrupt the Thread of your Diſcourſe; you may eaſily continue it again, and for failing, I will remember where you left off. That which I would ſay by the way, is this; I can verifie the Truth of what you were ſuppoſing, by my own Experience, and have often wonder'd what ſhould be the Reaſon of it, that Men have quite different Apprehenſions of time paſt, and time to come. When we look back (as you well obſerve) upon twenty or thirty Years which are gone, they ſeem but a trice to

us

us; but if we look forward, and fore-think of ſo many Years to come, we are apt to fanſy we have an Ocean before us, and ſuch a vaſt Proſpect that we can ſee no End of it. Now I ask your Opinion, what it is that puts ſuch a Fallacy upon us, for other it cannot be: foraſmuch as the ſame Term of Years, whether it be reckoned forward or backward, paſt or to come, muſt needs really be of the ſame Length and Duration?

Sebaſt. It is verily ſo as you ſay, and the Obſervation is very ingenious and pertinent to the Buſineſs in Hand. But to give you an account of the Reaſon of that different Eſtimate, I can ſay but theſe two things, *viz.* Either as it is in the nature of Hope, to flatter us, ſo all things ſeem bigger at a diſtance, and whilſt they are in Expectation only, than what we can find them to be in Fruition. Or elſe it muſt be, that what is paſt of our Lives we have freſh and lively Remarks upon, by remembring the notable Paſſages that have fallen out within that Compaſs, by which means thoſe equally remote Portions of time are brought nearer to our Eye.

But on the contrary, in the time which is to come, we can have no Remarks upon it; becauſe not knowing what ſhall happen, we have nothing to fix our Thoughts upon; and ſo it looks like a vaſt Ocean to us. For you know that things which are in confuſion ſeem to be more than the ſame things when they are digeſted into juſt Order and Method. And in travelling, you obſerve that twenty or thirty Miles, which we are well acquainted with, and have frequently traced, ſeems ſhort and inconſiderable; but the ſame Length of Journey in an unknown Way ſeems very tedious and formidable to us. Thus, I think, it is in the Caſe you have propounded; but now, if you pleaſe, let us paſs on where we were going.

I ſay then, ſuppoſe the Term of our Lives be eſtimated at the Duration of about ſeventy Years, yet in the firſt Place we muſt ſubduct from this Sum a very conſiderable Part, as taken up in Childhood and Youth, and which ſlips away we know not how, ſo as to eſcape our Obſervation, being wholly ſpent in Folly and Impertinency, but certainly loſt to all manly Purpoſes: To which if you add the Infirmities of Old Age, (which though it do not equally in all Men, yet) always more or leſs renders ſome part of our time uſeleſs; you will think is no unreaſonable *Poſtulatum* if I ſuppoſe, that both together take up a third part of the whole.

A Practical Demonſtration of the littleneſs of our ſpare time.

Then, in the next place, let us conſider how great a Proportion is taken up in Sleep, in eating and drinking, in dreſſing and undreſſing, in trimming and adorning, and, to be ſhort, in the mere Neceſſity of the Body. I have read of a brave *Saxon* Prince of this our native Countrey, who allowed only eight Hours in the Day, or one third Part of his time, to theſe uſes; but I doubt few mean Men follow his Example: And if we take meaſures from common Experience we ſhall find that theſe meaner Offices take up near, if not altogether, half the time of moſt perſons. And ſo another third of the whole is gone, and only one poor third remaining for all other occaſions.

Then again, out of that remainder, a very great Share will be challenged by neceſſary Buſineſs, the Affairs of our Eſtate or Calling, and the Concerns of our Families; and theſe occaſions are ſo importunate, that they will not be denied without culpable ill Husbandry, nor gratified without a large Proportion of the aforeſaid remainder.

Moreover, whether we will or no, another part will be raviſh'd from us by Sickneſs and Phyſick; in Civility and Complement, in viſiting and being viſited, in Journeys and News, and a thouſand Impertinencies; ſo that he muſt be a very good and wary Husband indeed, that ſuffers not great Expences this way.

And after all this, here is nothing for Reading and Study, for Meditation, and the Improvements of our own Minds; nay, not for Religion and Devotion towards God, and the unſpeakable Concerns of another World, which in all Reaſon may moſt juſtly put in for their ſhares.

Phil. All this is very true; but what do you inferr from this Account?

Sebaſt. I dare truſt your Judgment to make Inferences from the Premiſſes: For, in the firſt place, I know you cannot fail to obſerve, and that with a juſt Indignation, that the lighteſt matters of our Life have the greateſt Share of our time ſpent in them: Folly and Infirmity, Infancy and Dotage, take up the greateſt room of all: Then worldly Buſineſs and Pleaſure exhauſt the moſt of that which is left, and the Mind and nobleſt Intereſts have leaſt of all left for them.

And then, Secondly, you cannot but note, with Admiration, how very little Share God Almighty hath even from the very beſt of Men. And you cannot but adore his Goodneſs, which rewards with eternal Life that little time in which Men work in his Vineyard; for whether Men come in at the eleventh Hour or ſooner, it is too plain, that ſcarcely an eleventh part of our time is ſpent in his Service. But that which I aim at in this Calculation, is to demonſtrate to you that there is a great deal more Reaſon that Men ſhould endeavour rather to redeem time from leſſer occaſions, than to laviſh it in Impertinencies, that ſo our weightier

Concerns may have the more tolerable Allowances: And to be ſure he muſt be a very ſoft and feeble Man that after all theſe Ends are ſerved, can complain, that time lies upon his Hands, which was the thing to be proved.

Phil. I am now amazed at my own Stupidity, that could think fit to put ſuch a Caſe to you. Lord! what vain Fools are we that complain of Plenty, when we are rather ſtraiten'd and in want? What ſilly Prodigals are we that are ſo far from ſparing betimes; that we are not ſo much as frugal, when all theſe Claims and Demands come in ſo thick upon us? I have often heard it ſaid, that by keeping a ſtrict Account of Incomes and Expences, a Man might eaſily preſerve an Eſtate from Dilapidation; but now I perceive, that for the want of a little of your Arithmetick *to number our Days*, we run out our Leaſe of Life before we are aware; and fanſying we have enough to ſquander away upon every trifle, we have ordinarily little or nothing left to defray the moſt weighty occaſions.

And, with your Pardon, let me tell you I think now I have found where the Shooe pinches: It is not (I perceive now) a ſurpluſſage of time which tempts us to ſeek out thoſe Diverſions aforeſaid; but the mere Vanity of our Mind, which hath a Fondneſs for them: And then Cuſtom and Example have made them ſo natural and almoſt neceſſary to us, that we think the time long till we are at them. Not that we have much to ſpare, for, God knows, we have little enough; but becauſe we think much of all that which is otherwiſe employed. And, this, I doubt, is the true Reaſon why we are impatient of long Prayers, and offended with a long Sermon; which whoſo obſerves, would perhaps charitably ſuppoſe, that the urgency of Buſineſs would not permit us to attend them,

but

but we utterly deprive our ſelves of that Pretence, when we complain, that time lies upon our hands. To ſpeak truth therefore, and ſhame the Devil and our ſelves too, we can hardly ſpare time for God, becauſe we love him too little: But we have abundance of ſpare time for our idle Diverſions, only becauſe we love them too much.

Sebaſt. Dear *Phil.* you have hit the very Mark: But let us go on, and ſuppoſe, that our ſpare time were more than it is, or poſſibly can be, (upon the Premiſes) yet it will be no hard matter to find out more pleaſant, as well as more innocent Entertainments of it, than thoſe now in requeſt.

Innocent and pleaſant Employments of Time.

For, in the firſt Place, there are ſome Employments every whit as delightful as Recreations themſelves; ſuch as, in particular, Planting and Gardening, in which a Man may not only have the Pleaſure to contemplate the admirable Beauty and Variety of the Works of God, but by improving the nature of Plants, by altering the Species, by Mixture and Compoſition of ſeveral Beauties and Perfections into one, by deducing one out of another, exalting one by another, and, in a word, by giving Being and Continuance to ſeveral things, he becomes a kind of Creator himſelf, if I may, without Offence, uſe ſuch an Expreſſion. This kind of Buſineſs miniſters ſo many and ſo raviſhing Delights, that I remember *Cato* preferred it before all the Pleaſure of Youth, and thought the Entertainment of his elder Years herein a good Exchange for the voluptuouſneſs of younger Years, which he had now loſt all uſe and apprehenſion of. Nay, I think *Epicurus* himſelf placed a good Part of his Felicity in the Delights of his Garden. And, above all, I am certain that God Almighty who knew beſt what ſatisfactions were to be found

within the whole Sphere of his Creation, and was not invidious or niggardly towards Men, made choice of this for the Entertainment of our firſt Parents in their State of Innocency, and before their Folly and Sin had damned them to Care and Toil, and to the Sweat of their Brows.

Again, there are ſome Exerciſes and Recreations both of Body and Mind, which are very ingenious as well as divertive; ſuch as Singing, Muſick, Painting, and the like; in which a Man rather puts a pleaſant Deception upon himſelf in point of time, than wholly loſes it. And they are ſo far from debauching his Mind, or raiſing his Paſſions, that they only exalt a Man's Fancy, but otherwiſe compoſe his Temper, even to Admiration.

And if you will promiſe not to laugh at my peculiar Humour, I will refer another Inſtance to this Head, and tell you, that methinks the playing with a pretty humour'd Child of three or four Years old, or more or leſs, is ſcarcely inferior in Delightfulneſs to any of the former; where you ſhall obſerve Innocency of Mind, Benignity of Temper, ſweet and gentle Paſſions, eaſie and unforced Mirth, unfeigned Love, pretty Endearments of Affection, pleaſant Endeavours to ſpeak and expreſs it ſelf, little Dawnings of Reaſon and Fancy, and innumerable other things, which a Man can feel rather than expreſs. I called this my peculiar Fancy, but I do not know why it ſhould be peculiar to me; I ſuppoſe it may be more general: However I confeſs to you, I am much the better pleaſed with it, becauſe I find in the Goſpel, that our Saviour himſelf was not diſpleaſed with it.

Beſides, all theſe, there are ſome Offices of Humanity and Charity, which afford a Man unſpeakable Delight in the Diſcharge of them: Such as

comforting

comforting a Friend or Neighbour in his Affliction, or aſſiſting and counſelling him in his Difficulties; promoting Peace, and making an End of Controverſies; relieving a poor Man in his Hunger, *&c.* In all which, beſides the Satisfaction a Man hath in his own Mind, upon Conſideration that he hath done well and worthily, he is alſo ſenſible of a re-action, and as it were by Reflexion, participates of the Pleaſure thoſe Perſons find by his good Offices towards them: For, to ſay nothing of any of the other, what a Refreſhment is it to our own Bowels, to obſerve the Appetite and Guſto with which a poor hungry Man feeds upon that which you charitably ſupply him with? And it will do a Man's Heart good to take notice of the ſtrange Change wrought in ſuch a Perſon by a bountiful Entertainment; his Countenance more chearful, his Spirits brisk, his Heart light, his whole Temper more ſweet and ingenious. All which who can be acceſſary to without a kind of virtuous Epicuriſm?

All theſe which I have named are ſincere and manly Pleaſures, without Noiſe, and without Danger; which neither raiſe a Man's Paſſions, nor drown his Reaſon: They are neither ſo fine and ſpiritual, that the Body can have no participation of them; nor ſo groſs and feculent, that the Mind ſhould be aſhamed of them. And in ſome or other of theſe every Man that pleaſes may ſpend his vacant Hours with Satisfaction.

But let me now go a little higher; and what if we take in ſomewhat of the other World to ſweeten the preſent Life? What think you, after all, of Prayer to God, and reading the Scripture? May not a Man beſtow ſome of his time in theſe with as much Pleaſure as Devotion, and ſo (to allude to modern Philoſophy) *Of Prayer, and reading the Scriptures.*

fill up the void Spaces of his Life with celeſtial Matter.

As for the former of them, Prayer, I remember you well obſerved, that ſeveral of thoſe Men who complain as if they were over-burthen'd with time, yet love to make as ſhort Work with this as they can; wherein they betray either ſome meaſure of Atheiſm in their Hearts, or a great deal of Senſuality in their Affections: And I cannot tell whether they more contradict themſelves, or diſcover their ſhameful Ignorance of the nobleſt Pleaſures of Life. For beſides that it is highly agreeable to the beſt Reaſon of a Man's Mind, that he ſhould do all Honour to the divine Majeſty, and daily pay his Homage to his greateſt Benefactor; and nothing, ſure, can be more delightful, than the Exerciſe of our higheſt Powers about their proper Object. And beſides that, Prayer is the known way to obtain the divine Bleſſing, upon which all the Pleaſure and Comfort of our Lives depend, and never fails of Succeſs one way or other.

Beſides all this, I ſay, and abundance of other Advantages of it, it is the very Pulſe of the Soul, which keeps the Spirits florid and vital; it anſwers to the Motion of the Lungs in the Body, and exhales thoſe melancholy Vapours that would choak and ſuffocate our Hearts: By it we put our ſelves under the divine Protection, and our Spirits are heighten'd and fortified by the Patronage of ſo high a Genius, who can ſecure us againſt all Aſſaults and Dangers whatſoever. When we have commended our ſelves to the divine Providence by Prayer, our Hearts are at reſt; we are ſecure ſleeping and waking; we are never alone, but have always one to ſecond us; whatever the Iſſue and Succeſs of our Endeavours be; our Minds are quieted; if Things anſwer our Wiſhes, we have a dou-

a double Satisfaction, that God Almighty favours us, as well as that our Labours are ſucceſsful; if things miſcarry, we impute no Folly nor Omiſſion to our ſelves, we have done all that was fit for us to do, but it pleaſed divine Wiſdom to diſappoint us. Beſides the frequent Approach of the divine Majeſty puts a Gravity upon a Man's Countenance, checks and keeps down all Exorbitancy of Paſſions, begets an ingenuous Modeſty, and makes Men as well aſhamed as afraid to do an unworthy Action.

To all which add, that by the Advantage of our Prayers we are enabled to become a publick Bleſſing, and every private Man a Benefactor to the whole World; than which thing, what can be either greater in it ſelf, or more acceptable to a great and generous Mind? Conſequently, what can a brave and publick-ſpirited Man employ his time in with more Delight, than in that which (whatſoever his Fortunes and external Condition be) will make him a Bleſſing, not only to his Friends and Neighbourhood, but to the Countrey and Times he lives in; that even Kings and Princes are really beholden to him? Nor is it neceſſary that much time be taken up herein, to ſerve all theſe great Ends; nor much leſs is it my Intention to commend affectedly long Prayers: A little Time, and a great deal of Heartineſs beſt doth the Buſineſs of Religion; and that little ſo employed will make all the reſt paſs away the more ſweetly and comfortably.

And then for reading and meditating upon the Holy Scriptures, the Pſalmiſt hath told us, that the good and bleſſed Man's *Delight is in the Law of God, and* that *therein he meditates Day and Night:* And ſurely any Man may be able to entertain a few Moments in it. If Curioſity ſway with us, there are as admirable things in the Holy Scriptures

tures as the Mind of Man can deſire. If we affect Hiſtory, we have there the ancienteſt and moſt faithful Monuments in the World; thoſe, without which all Mankind had continued in their Nonage and Childhood to this Day, as being ſo far from able to give an Account of the Beginning of the World, and Original of Things, that they could not have looked backward many Ages, but they would have been utterly bewildered in Miſts and Fables, as abſurd as the wildeſt Fictions of Poets. Beſides, without this Record, all the wonderful Methods of divine Providence (which are the Aſſurance and Comfort of the preſent Age, and the Obligation to Virtue and Foundation of Piety and Religion) had been buried in Oblivion.

If we ſeek after Knowledge, either natural, moral or prudential, where is there ſuch another Treaſury of it to be found as this, where we have not only the Relations and Obſervations of the wiſeſt Men in all Ages paſt, but the Diſcoveries of the divine Majeſty, the Depths of infinite Wiſdom (that know the true Reaſon of things) laid open.

If we are pleaſed with the foreknowledge of things to come, (as what Man of Soul can chuſe but deſire to ſee beyond the Curtain?) then all the Preſages, Prognoſticks and Divinations, all the moſt rational Inductions of the wiſeſt Men, are but ſilly Surmiſes and idle Dreams to the Predictions of the holy Prophets, which give us light to the World's End, and a view of another World: And have both aſſured their own Credit, and warranted our Belief of what is yet to come, by the well known Accompliſhment of their former Predictions.

If we would improve our ſelves in Virtue, what ſurer Rule can we have than the expreſs Declarations of God himſelf? Who can preſcribe to him

him what ſhall pleaſe him, or preſcribe to us better than he that made us, and knows what is fit for us to do? And what more full, plain, compendious and higher Inſtitution of Religion can there be than the Holy Scripture?

This brings God near to us, and us near to him; here you know his Mind, you ſee his Nature, and hear him ſpeak; here you may ſtand as it were upon an *Iſthmus* or Promontory, and take a view of both Worlds; this is the Light of our Eyes, the Rule of our Faith, the Law of our Conſcience, and the Foundation of all our Hopes. All this together, ſure cannot chuſe but make the reading of the Scripture become a very ſerious and yet a very delightful Employment. And now, upon the whole matter, what think you, dear *Phil.* May not a Gentleman entertain himſelf, and his time without the Relief of drinking and gaming?

Phil. What think I, ſay you? Why I think worſe of my ſelf than ever I did. I do not wonder now at what you ſaid when we firſt came together, *viz.* That you could always find Employment for your time; but I wonder at my own Folly: For I plainly ſee now, that no Man can have time to be a Burthen upon him that hath come honeſtly by it; I mean that hath not ſtollen it from nobler Entertainments, to beſtow it upon a Debauch.

Sebaſt. But yet this is not all neither, I perceive I have ſatisfied you both of the Pleaſantneſs of ſome lighter but innocent Exerciſes, which I named in the firſt Place; and alſo of the great Importance of Prayer, and reading the Scripture, which I laſt ſpoke of: Yet, as on the one Hand, I would not have a Man employ all his vacant Hours on the former; ſo neither on the other Hand do I think he is bound to exhauſt them wholly upon the latter. No, *Phil.* our Bodies are compounded of va-

rious

riours Humours; our Souls conſiſt of ſeveral Faculties; God is a good and benign Being, and conſults the Good and Comfort of all the Powers he hath created. Beſides all the fore-mention'd, therefore, (and thoſe which I have ſuppoſed, without naming them particularly) there is a way of entertaining our ſelves called Study and Meditation. Study, I ſay, in general; not confined to any Subject, but only directed to the general End of improving our ſelves, and the time God hath given us in the World.

Of Study and Meditation; the Advantages and the Difficulties of it.

For why ſhould we abject our ſelves that have rational Souls, an active, vigorous, intellectual Spirit in us? Is not this able to employ it ſelf, our time, and our bodily Spirits too? Is not our Mind large enough to embrace the whole World? Can we not bring upon the Theatre of our Imagination all the Occurrences of time paſt, as well as preſent? Muſt we needs only pore upon the things juſt before our Eyes? Muſt our Underſtandings lie fallow and barren, unleſs they be continually ſtirred up by our Senſes? Are our Souls only given us for Salt to keep the Body ſweet, or ſervilely to cater for our inferior Powers; and not rather to ſubdue and govern them?

Why ſhould we not remember we are Men and improve our beſt Talent, ſharpen the Senſe of our Minds, and enlarge and greaten our Spirits? what hinders but that a Man may converſe with himſelf, and never have better Company than when he is moſt ſolitary? How can a Man want Company that hath an angelical Nature within him; or need Diverſion, that hath the whole World before him to contemplate?

What ſhould diſcourage or hinder Men from this Courſe? Is it the Pains and Difficulty? Nothing

thing in the World is pleaſanter when a Man is once uſed to it. Is it for fear we ſhould exhauſt our ſelves, and, like the Spider, ſpin out our own Bowels in our Web? There can be no Danger of that, an immortal Soul never wears out; and if the Body goes by the worſt, ſo long as the Spirit is bettered, there is no Loſs in all this. Or ſay it ſhould be to no great fruit that we apply our ſelves to Study, yet, at leaſt, this is gotten by it, that we employ our time and keep our ſelves out of Harms, which is as much as we now ſeek for.

Phil. It is generally the Fault of eloquent and contemplative Men to out-ſhoot the Mark they aim at; and whilſt they talk finely, to deliver very unpracticable things. Pardon me, dear *Sebaſtian*, if I ſuppoſe this Infirmity hath accompany'd thoſe great Accompliſhments in you at this time. No doubt but Meditation is a noble Entertainment of time; and queſtionleſs, he that hath once got the knack of it, nothing in the World is ſo pleaſant to him: But you muſt conſider, there are very few who have ſo much Command over themſelves, as to hold their Minds long ſteady and intent, and perhaps fewer that have ſufficient Knowledge to employ their Thoughts at Home; it requires a great Stock for a Man to be able to ſet up this Trade by himſelf. Beſides many Mens Spleens are ſo near their Heads, and there is ſo great Affinity between the animal Spirits and Vapours, that he that goes to exerciſe the one, ſtirs up the other; and oftentimes, the greater the Intention of Mind is with which a Man ſets himſelf to think, the greater Cloud is raiſed, and the more impoſſible it will prove for ſuch a Man to diſcern any thing clearly. Your Advice therefore is very good for them that can receive it; but this is no *Catholicon*, no general Receipt.

Sebaſt. I thank you, Sir, moſt heartily for the modeſt and ſeaſonable Check you gave to the Ca-

reer

reer of my Diſcourſe: I muſt confeſs, upon ſecond Thoughts, that all Men are not fit for Meditation, and therefore it cannot be their Duty; yet I muſt tell you withal, I ſuſpect more are unwilling than uncapable, and I doubt ſome are more afraid of awakening their Conſcience, than ſtirring their Spleen by it. However, I have another Expedient to propound, (for the Purpoſe we are upon) which will ſupply the Place of the former, and which, I am ſure, can be liable to no Objection; and that is, Conference or Diſcourſe: Which when I have recommended to you, I ſhall have delivered my whole Mind.

Of friendly Conference, and the great Benefits of it.

God Almighty hath given us Speech to expreſs our ſelves to one another. We are not left alone in the World ſo, but that every Man hath ſome Friend or Neighbour to hold Correſpondence with: Why ſhould we not then entertain our ſelves, our Friends, and our time in friendly Communication, without the Help of the Bottle? *&c.* This requires no great Intention of Mind, no great Stock is required in this Caſe; this will ſtir up no Vapours from our Spleen; and by this way we may not only divert our ſelves, but elucidate our own Thoughts, enlarge our Experience, reſolve one another's difficulties, and mutually pleaſe and profit one another.

And the more effectually to recommend this Expedient to you, I will firſt take the Confidence to affirm, and do not doubt but I ſhall by and by make it evidently appear, that this is not only a very genteel and creditable way of Converſation, but alſo (if it be rightly practiſed) a moſt pleaſant and delightful, and (which perhaps may ſeem the greateſt Paradox of all) one of the moſt healthful Exerciſes in the World.

The

The firſt of theſe you will eaſily grant me, when you conſider, that Diſcourſe is that which principally diſtinguiſhes a wiſe Man from a Fool. For, what elſe do we take our meaſures of one another by? If a Man diſcourſe of weighty matters, and keep cloſe to the Point, and ſpeak ſharply in the Caſe, we account him a worthy Man. But contrariwiſe, if he talk flatly, inſipidly and impertinently, we have no Eſteem or Reverence for ſuch a Perſon, let his outward Appearance and Circumſtances be otherwiſe what they will.

It is certain we cannot know a Man's Thoughts, or the Senſe of his Mind, till he expreſſes them: A Fool, we ſay, is a wiſe Man ſo long as he holds his Peace, and a wiſe Man differs nothing from a Fool till he ſpeaks. For a Man's Actions may be by rote, or cuſtom, or the direction of ſome other Perſon, but a Man's Diſcourſe is his own. *Out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth ſpeaketh*, ſaid our Saviour. The Tongue will betray not only the Inclinations and Paſſions of the Heart, but the very Senſe and Capacity of the Mind, and the latter much more than the former, (as the Liquor will carry the tincture of the Veſſel.) 'Tis poſſible, indeed, for an evil and vicious Man to talk virtuouſly, and a ſilly Man may get into a Road of wiſe Sayings: But the Leſſon he hath conn'd will ſoon be at an End, and then he will no more be able to hold out at that Rate, than a flaw'd Veſſel to make the ſame Sound with a good one. Wiſdom and Folly are widely different in their Natures; but it is Diſcourſe that lays them open, and makes the Diſtinction conſpicuous: Why then ſhould not a Man, by practice, endeavour to become expert at that, which, if he be Maſter of, will be his Glory, but to be ſure will make his Character.

But

But now for the vulgar Methods of Converſation, which commonly conſiſt of Drinking and Gaming, they are no better than levelling Practices, that obſerve no Diſtance, nor make any Diſtinction amongſt Men; the Maſter and Servant are at *Hail Fellow*, the Gentleman and the Clown are upon the Square with one another; the Man of Parts and Learning and the veryeſt Ideot and Coxcomb are upon even Ground in thoſe Entertainments.

Drinking and Gaming are levelling Practices.

As for Drinking, I cannot ſufficiently wonder at that Abjection of Mind in Perſons of Quality, who, as if they conſented to their own Degradation, will contend for Victory with their Inferiors at equal Glaſſes; when it is notorious, that a Porter ſhall bear more than a Gentleman; and a fine Wit ſhall be baffled and diſordered with that which a thick-skull'd dull Sot will carry away well enough, and come off as wiſe a Man as he enter'd. But ſuppoſe the Gentleman ſhould out-do the Clown, and the Wit the Dunce; yet as the Match was made very imprudently, ſo the Victory would be inglorious.

And then for Gaming, I have heard of an Ape that has been too hard for his Maſter at that moſt ingenious Game at Cheſs: But I have known one very near to a Natural, that hath been a great Maſter at it. And certainly it is very eaſie to imagine that in thoſe other Games that are governed by chance, the Victory may fall to the leſs worthy Perſon. It ſeems therefore a very mean thing to be eagerly intent upon that to which a wiſe Man hath no better Title than a Fool, and if we believe the Proverb, much leſs. To be ſure no Man can be ſo vain as to think himſelf the wiſer or better Man for his Conqueſt. But, now, Diſcourſe diſcriminates Men's real Abilities, and bears an im-

partial Teſtimony to a Man's Worth; and the Conteſts of Reaſon are therefore truly honourable, becauſe the wiſer Man is ſure to have the Victory.

But then ſecondly, for the Pleaſure and Delightfulneſs of Diſcourſe, it cannot be doubted, but that the higher Powers in a Man are attended with the ſweeteſt Delights in the Exerciſe of themſelves; and the more ſtrong and vigorous the Conſtitution of thoſe Powers is, the more quick and raviſhing muſt the Senſe of their peculiar Pleaſure conſequently be. This

The Pleaſure of Diſcourſe.

the Experience of all ſtudious Men bears teſtimony to, among whom one Truth ſifted out by Reaſon, is more pleaſant than all the Entertainments of an Epicure. For in Diſcourſe there is a very grateful Reliſh in the mere bandying of Arguments to and fro; great Curioſity in diſtinguiſhing; Prettineſs in a handſomely dreſt Probability; Surprize in Paradoxes ingenuouſly maintained, admirable Beauty in that ſtrange variety of Colours in which a good Wit will repreſent things, far beyond the Hand and Skill of a Painter: All which, with a thouſand other Particulars which I paſs by, render the Pleaſure of Diſcourſe as much tranſcendent to all Inſtances of Senſuality, as Reaſon it ſelf is above Senſe, or a Man ſuperior to a Beaſt.

And now in the laſt Place, for that ſeeming Paradox concerning the Wholeſomeneſs of diſcourſing: It is obſerved, that they who are curious of the Health of their Bodies, to the end that they may invigorate all their Powers and Faculties, have to that purpoſe found out appropriate Exerciſes to all the principal Parts; For ſo, they ſay, Walking is peculiarly good for Digeſtion, by gently agitating the Stomach and Bowels; Riding is ſingularly beneficial to the

Diſcourſing an healthful Exerciſe.

Head; playing at Bowls helps the Reins, and the uſe of the Long-bow is eſpecially commended for opening the Breaſt and Lungs, *&c.* Now I think I may be bold to ſay, that whatſoever each of theſe is to its reſpective Part and Member, that will ſmart and vigorous Conference perform to the whole Man. For as to the very bodily Powers, it warms the Heart and Stomach, dries the Brain, opens the Lungs, quickens the Motion of the Blood, and brings a freſh and florid Colour into the Face and whole Habit. And then as for the better Part of Man; Diſcourſe raiſes the Fancy, exerciſes the Memory, clears the Thoughts, enlightens the Judgment and improves the Reaſoning of the Mind: To which add, if you pleaſe, that it diverts Melancholy, puts off Dozing, baniſhes anxious Thoughts and Solicitude; and, in a word, holds a Man ſo fully employed, that it leaves no room for the very Temptations of the Devil.

And now I appeal to you, judge whether I have performed my Promiſe or no: If I have, then, beſides all the afore-mentioned, here is a manly Employment of Time always at hand; an Exerciſe that every one is capable of that hath a Tongue in his Head, and a Soul in his Body. Thus we may treat our Neighbour, and coſt us nothing but what we (it ſeems) have too much of, I mean Time. And thus we may profit our ſelves, and oblige him too beyond all other Entertainments.

Phil. I have a great Reverence for your Judgment; but, in truth, I cannot tell what to ſay to this goſſiping kind of Diverſion, and till this moment I never thought Lip-Labour had been of ſuch value. As for thinking Men, the World is content to let them enjoy the Reputation of being wiſe, or at leaſt to ſuſpend their Judgment of them

them till they ſee the contrary in the Unreadineſs of ſuch Men in all the inſtances of gentile and pleaſant Converſation. But as for talkative Men; (I need not tell you) they have ever been accounted troubleſome and impertinent. And for your own part, good *Sebaſtian*, give me leave to ſay, that your Practice confutes your Doctrine; for after all this, which with great Wit and Eloquence you have ſpoken, in the Commendation of diſcurſive Converſation; and notwithſtanding that every one who knows you, knows your ſingular Dexterity in managing any Subject that falls under Debate in your Company; yet you, of all Men are generally obſerved to be the moſt ſilent and reſerved. It is true at this time you have been diſpoſed to talk very freely with me (for which I am greatly obliged to you;) but at ſeveral other times it is a hard matter to pump any thing out of you.

Sebaſt. I ſee plainly that there is a wrong as well as a right handle to every thing, and a continual proneneſs in Men to miſtake one another. Whenſoever any Vice is cenſured, or expoſed, Men preſently think the contrary Extreme to that Practice muſt needs be the Virtue: So whilſt I have been recommending ingenious and friendly Conference, you repreſent me as if I had made it my Deſign to plead for impertinent Talkativeneſs; which, truly, I am ſo far from, that I think the World doth that ſort of Men no wrong in the Cenſure it paſſes upon them; amongſt whom, (if it be a wiſe Man's Lot to be caſt) he will think himſelf in the Region of Parrots; and for his Deliverance, be tempted to pray for Deafneſs as a great Bleſſing. No, *Phil.* no; I would neither have Men ſay all they can, nor much leſs talk whether they can or no; but I would have them firſt think to direct their ſpeaking, and then ſpeak that a Judgment may be made of their Thoughts: I would

that Men ſhould bend their Minds whenever they relax their Tongues, and try the Strength of one another's Heads in reaſoning, rather than in drinking.

But then, as for what your ſelf or others have obſerved of my Carriage in Company, I confeſs the Obſervation is rightly taken, and I will ingenuouſly aſſign you the Occaſions of it; which are (as far as I know my ſelf) ſuch as theſe: In the firſt Place, it ſometimes falls out, that the Subject which other Men are diſcourſing of, is not very agreeable to my Mind; as in theſe unquiet Times, the common Theme is News; which, as it is uſually managed is frequently attended with Pragmaticalneſs and Cenſure of the Government under which we live; or at leaſt the Effect of it is the filling one another with Fears and Jealouſies, and the tormenting a Man's ſelf before the time, with his own or other Men's Dreams and Suſpicions. Now in this Caſe I am generally ſilent; at leaſt, till I can find a fit tranſition, and have the good luck to turn the Stream of Diſcourſe ſome other way.

Juſt Occaſions of Taciturnity or Reſervedneſs ſometimes in Converſation.

Again, ſometimes I am in the Company of thoſe who are every way my Betters; and there I think it is much more adviſeable to hear than to ſpeak, as it is better to reap than to ſow.

Sometimes alſo I meet with a Company of deſultorious Wits, who skip ſo haſtily from one thing to another that they over-run me; and whilſt I am meditating what to ſay pertinently to the Queſtion in hand, they are gotten into another Subject: A Man muſt ride poſt, or be left behind by ſuch Diſcourſers.

But beſides all this, ſometimes a mere melancholy Humour ſeizes me, which ſo benumbs me, that I am for that Fit altogether uſeleſs in Society. But let

let that be as it may, or however my Practice falls short in my Counſel, I am certain my Example is not ſufficient to counter-balance the Reaſons I have given. Wherefore let me again heartily recommend it to you, not only for its own Benefit; but if it were but to ſuperſede and lay aſide thoſe other ſoft and ſilly Diverſions which have of late ſo far uſurped upon humane Society, as well nigh wholly to ingroſs to themſelves all Men's vacant Hours, and a great deal more.

Phil. You have the Aſcendant of me, and may perſuade me to what you will: But, good Sir, do not convert me from a good Fellow to a prating Fool. If I had been uſed to ſtudy, and been converſant in Books, as you have, I might have been in a Capacity to pleaſe my ſelf, and perhaps the Company too with Diſcourſe; but for want of that Education Silence will generally be my beſt Diſcretion.

Sebaſt. Books, *Phil.* It is neither Books nor much reading that makes a wiſe Man. How many ſhrewd Men have you known and very well accompliſh'd in moſt Parts of Converſation, that never had any great matter of Clerkſhip? And on the other ſide, amongſt the great number of thoſe that have had all the Advantages of bookiſh Education, how few are thoſe that are really the better for it? With many Men reading is nothing better than a dozing kind of Idleneſs, and the Book is a mere Opiate that makes them ſleep with their Eyes open. 'Tis perverted into an Antidote againſt thinking wiſely, and made a creditable Pretence for Diſmiſſion of Buſineſs. Such Mens ſtudying is only an Artifice to reconcile the Eaſe and Voluptuouſneſs of Sloth with the Reputation of Wiſdom; a gentile and wary kind of Epicuriſm, that ſurfeits without Pain or Shame,

Of the uſe and abuſe of Books and Reading.

and in which Men ſpend their time without Profit to themſelves, or Uſefulneſs to the World.

Again, there are ſome with whom Bookiſhneſs is a Diſeaſe: For by overmuch reading they ſurcharge their Minds, and ſo digeſt nothing. They ſtuff themſelves ſo full of other Mens Notions, that there is no room for their Faculties to diſplay themſelves. Such as theſe after all their reading can no more be accounted learned, than a Beaſt of Burthen may that carries a Student's Books for him. Only ſo much Meat is properly Nouriſhment to the Body as a Man can macerate and digeſt, as he can apply to the Reparation of his Body, when he can ſeparate the Superfluities, and be ſtronger and lightſomer after it; more than this breeds ill Humours, obſtructs the Paſſages, and impairs the ſtate of Health inſtead of advancing it; and ſo much Study only is profitable as will excite a Man's Thoughts, as will afford Hints or Sallies to the Mind, or as will furniſh him with matter for Meditation and Diſcourſe; which two laſt things are the two great Inſtruments of improving our ſelves, and therefore are to preſcribe the meaſures of our Study and Reading.

Wherefore it was well ſaid by a great Man of our Countrey, that Reading indeed might make a full and copious Man, but Meditation made a profound Man, and Diſcourſe a clear, diſtinct and uſeful Man. For Reading, at moſt, doth but make a Man's Mind equal to that of the Author he reads, but Meditation ſets him upon the Shoulders of his Author, by which means he ſees farther than he did or could do. Or whereas the one may fill up all the preſent Capacity of a Man's Mind, the other, *viz.* Meditation, ſtretches and enlarges thoſe Capacities. And then for Diſcourſe (which is that we are now ſpeaking of) beſides the Advantages which it hath in common with Meditation, it

opens

opens and unfolds a Man's Thoughts, and ſo brings his Notions to a Teſt, and makes proof of the Solidity or Weakneſs of his Conceptions: By which means, as on the one hand he ſhall not run away with the Shadows of things inſtead of the Subſtance; ſo on the other hand, when his Apprehenſions are ſifted, and approved to be right and ſound, his Mind will be confirmed againſt wavering, and he will become conſtant and conſiſtent with himſelf. I have often obſerved, with equal Pleaſure and Wonder, that by the mere propounding a Difficulty to another, I have preſently been able to reſolve that which was too hard for me, whilſt I revolved it only in my own Breaſt. For, by that opening and unfolding of our Thoughts, we let in Light to our own Judgments, and ſee clearer than we did before.

Beſides, a Man is too apt to have a partial fondneſs to the iſſue of his own Brain; but when he hath brought his Conceptions to the impartial Touch-ſtone of other Men's Judgments, and as it were try'd them by the Light, he will neither be apt to be upon all Occaſions over-confident, peremptory and dogmatical; (as you may obſerve many reſerved ſtudious Men to be, who when once they give vent to their Thoughts, labour under a kind of Incontinency of Mind, and will be continually dictating and aſſerting at all adventures) nor on the other ſide will he ſtumble at every rub, and ſtagger at every objection, and ſo give up the beſt Cauſe upon the ſlighteſt (but unforeſeen) Attack.

And there is one thing more very conſiderable in this matter; namely, that by Conference a Man is accuſtomed to methodize and digeſt his Thoughts in order; by which means his Notions are not only render'd more beautiful, but are more at hand, and alſo more perſpicuous and fitter for uſe. Where-

as contrariwiſe (let a Man have read ever ſo much, and meditated too into the bargain) without this Expedient all his Notions will lie very odly and confuſedly, and come out all in a heap or huddle. In ſum, he that uſes himſelf only to Books, is fit for nothing but for a Book; and he that converſes with no body, is fit to converſe with no body.

Phil. In truth, *Sebaſtian*, though I am very ſenſible of my own Defects in point of Learning, yet in that little Experience which I have had in the World, I have ſeen ſo many Inſtances of the ill uſe, or rather no uſe that ſome Men have made of it, that I am not only convinced there is ſome truth in what you ſay, but am the better inclined to be content with my own Education. I have known ſome mighty bookiſh Men like full Veſſels without vent, as if they were troubled with the Gripes; their Notions ferment in them, but they cannot utter them either to their own Eaſe, or the Profit of others. And again, ſome Men's Learning hath ſerved only to make them pedantick and troubleſome, to make a Noiſe with Words and Terms of Art, every whit as offenſive as the clatter of the Table-men, which you laugh'd at even now. Notwithſtanding, by your favour, it cannot be doubted but Learning hath mighty Advantages; and I verily think you ſhould ſpeak againſt your own Conſcience, if you condemned it in the general. Wherefore you muſt excuſe me if I continue of the Opinion, that it is next to impoſſible, without more of it than I can pretend to, to hold ſuch Converſation as you are putting me upon.

Sebaſt. Excuſe me, dear *Phil.* I do not in the leaſt put any ſlight upon Learning, or the means of it, Books and Study? I know well it is of admirable uſe in a wiſe Man's Hand, becauſe it gradually and inſenſibly opens Mens Minds, and both gives them a quicker Sight, and affords them a larger

larger Proſpect. And even on the moſt ordinary-parted Men it hath at leaſt this effect, to calm the Spirits, and to ſweeten their Temper, by ſubduing the fierceneſs and ferity of Mens Conſtitutions. And therefore I heartily wiſh, that no Gentlemen (eſpecially) were permitted to attain his State and Fortunes without this Qualification. So that all I was ſaying was only this, that neither you nor any Man of your Capacity, ought to diſcourage your ſelves upon the pretence of your leſſer Advantages that way; foraſmuch as a wiſe and good Man may (though perhaps not with the ſame Eaſe) with a very little of it maintain an ingenuous and profitable Converſation.

Phil. Perhaps it may be ſo as you ſay: But then certainly a Man muſt have very extraordinary natural Abilities to ſupply that Defect.

Converſation improves a Man more than Books and Study:

Sebaſt. No, *Phil.* that needs not neither: For Diſcourſe will both ſupply the want of acquired Abilities, and alſo improve the natural. I ſuppoſe you remember the ſaying of *Solomon*, *As Iron ſharpeneth Iron, ſo doth the Countenance of a Man his Friend.* I confeſs I have heard that Paſſage of the wiſe Man apply'd to the viſiting and comforting a Friend in Adverſity, which certainly doth mightily buoy up and ſupport a Man's Spirits when he finds that he is not altogether forſaken of his Friend, but owned by him in the loweſt Ebb of his Fortunes. But I think it is every whit as true and applicable to that we are ſpeaking of, as if he had ſaid, that the Company and Converſation of a Friend doth as well quicken a Man's Wits and improve his Underſtanding, as one Iron Inſtrument is ſharpen'd by another. For, as I ſaid before, Conference and Diſcourſe give us the Advantage of whatſoever he (we converſe with) hath read or thought upon that

that Subject, and ſo we reap the Benefit of his Reading and of his Meditations too. And then beſides that we exerciſe our own Judgment upon the matter ſo digeſted and prepared for us; the very Preſence and Attention of our Friend ſharpens the Attention of our Minds; his Queſtion prevents our Extravagancy and Wandring, and keeps us in a method, and his Expectation from us holds our Thoughts cloſe and ſteady to the point in Debate. By all which not only the Stock of our Knowledge is improved, but the Patrimony alſo: I mean the very Powers of the Soul. In Conſideration of all which, that great Man of our Countrey, whom I cited but now, doth not ſtick to pronounce, that if it ſhould be a Man's hard Fortune to have no body to converſe withal, it were better he ſhould talk to a Poſt than not to open his Mouth at all.

Phil. There you nick it, *Sebaſtian*; by that laſt Word (whoever was the Author of it) I perceive a wiſe Man may make ſome uſe of ſuch a Fool as I am, if it be but to reflect and echo back his own Thoughts upon himſelf. But in earneſt, Sir, now that you have encourag'd me, I begin to think ſomething better of my ſelf, and am reſolv'd to try what may be done in the way you recommend. But what would you have a Man diſcourſe about? I am afraid, if there be not ſome Care in the choice of a Subject, all will degenerate into Goſſipping and impertinent Chat.

Sebaſt. There is no need of Solicitude in that particular, foraſmuch as any, even the moſt obvious and occaſional Subject will enable us to attain the End we aim at, provided it be followed home; I mean, talk of what matter you will, if ſo be you do not talk flatly and careleſly about it, but ſet your Thoughts on work, and they will bring forth both Pleaſure and Profit. For the

more

more Exercise of our Minds improves them as well as that of the Body doth the State of bodily Health; and whilst our Thoughts are intent, though we are not sensible how time slips away, yet we shall be sensible in the conclusion that we have not quite lost it.

Besides, you have observed Musicians to make the most curious Descant upon the plainest ground, and have seen several of the *Indian* Manufactures, where the most exquisite Art hath been bestowed upon the meanest Materials: 'Tis not therefore the Theme, but the Prosecution of it that is considerable, for, as I said, let that be what you will, if you pursue it with a train of Thoughts, and especially if you be vigilant to take notice of, and apprehend those hints that will thence be occasionally started, you shall quickly be amazed to find your self led before you were aware into some spacious and beautiful Field of Contemplation, wherein you may at once both lose and refresh your self.

Notwithstanding, I acknowledge to you that the pitching upon some good and useful Subject at first, is both the shortest and the surest way to attain our End. For the very Importance and Concern of a weighty Affair naturally rouzes up our Minds, and collects and fixes our loose and scattered Thoughts; as you shall seldom see any Man drouzy and inattentive whilst a matter of consequence to his Life, or Credit, or Fortune is in agitation.

Therefore, that having thus prepared you to it, I may now speak a great Truth to you, and that you may effectually shake off all the Fooleries in fashion, and make Conversation profitable. And if indeed you would awaken your Senses, and improve your self and your time together, let me, above all things in the World, commend to you religious Communication, talk of the Concerns

of

Diſcourſe about religious Matters recommended.

of a Soul, and of another World. This is a Subject of that Weight and Moment, that it cannot fail either to make you intent, or the Company you ſhall be in grave and ſerious; and it is withal ſo vaſt and large, that you can never fear to be run on ground; for it will always afford you freſh matter of Diſcourſe.

Phil. 'Tis true the Subject is copious enough, and I may be ſure to have it all to my ſelf, becauſe no body will talk with me about it. Who is there now-a-days that troubles his Head with Religion, or eſpecially makes it any part of Converſation? If, perhaps, any mention of it fall in by the bye, it is preſently let fall again, as if it were too hot for Men's Fingers; and at moſt it is made but a kind of Parentheſis, which may be kept in, or left out of the Diſcourſe without Interruption of the Senſe. You have found me out a Subject indeed, but now you muſt ſeek me out Company too to treat upon it. For as the World now is this will ſeem ſo irkſome a Buſineſs, that no time will be ſo tedious as that which is ſpent upon it, and ſo we have loſt the whole Deſign we were levelling at.

Sebaſt. Who (ſay you) will diſcourſe of Religion? Why every body ſure that thinks of it, for it is a matter that comes ſo home and cloſe to every Man, that he muſt be a ſtark Sot, and deſtitute of the common Senſe and Diſcretion of a Man, that is not mightily affected with it.

For tell me, is there any Man ſo abſurdly vain as to think he ſhall not die? Can any Man that obſerves the frail Contexture of his Body, and the innumerable Accidents he is ſubject to, think himſelf immortal? or can he overlook the common Condition of Mankind, and when he ſees Men daily drop away and die in their full Strength, and in ſpight of all Helps and Advantages for Preſervation;

on; yet be so fond as to imagine, he shall escape the common Lot? And seeing what happens to another Man to day, may befal himself to morrow; or however, he is certain that he cannot be of any long Continuance in this World; who, I say, that is sensible of this, can chuse but pry beyond the Curtain, and bethink himself what shall come after?

Is it not the very Temper and Constitution of our Minds to be inquisitive of the future? Is it not a great part of our Prerogative above Beasts, that whereas they are wholly taken up with what's present to them, and neither mind what is past nor to come; we, by the largeness of our Souls, embrace both, and do we not worthily count him an Idiot, that is so short-sighted as not to see beyond his Nose end?

The Importance of Religion.

Doth not every wise Man provide for what may be? and do not even the most cold and incredulous suspect at least there may be something concern us after the present life? and is there any Man that can, if he would never so fain, quite rid his thoughts of it? Sure therefore every Man that thinks he shall die (that is, every Man that lives) thinks something of Religion, if it be but for fear of the worst. Perhaps you will say, there are some Men, who though they know they shall die, yet think they shall die as the Beasts die, and have no Concern hereafter: But are they worthy to be accounted Men that can fansie such a thing? A Beast indeed hath Life, and Sense, and Motion, and participates of some kind of Fancy and Memory; but doth it understand a Discourse, or weigh an Argument? Is it able to inferr from Premisses, to remember things gone and past, and recall them to mind at pleasure? Can it compare things together, gather the result, distinguish or pass a judgment upon Appearances? Will any Man be so ridiculous as

to

to ſay, Beaſts are conſcientious too, that they reflect upon their own Actions, and accuſe and excuſe themſelves accordingly? or have they free will to determine their Elections which way they pleaſe, even againſt the intereſt of their Senſes? Now he that conſiders all theſe vaſt differences will, if he have the Reaſon of a Man, conclude it very improbable, that a Creature of this admirable Make ſhould be only deſigned to be a Pageant for a day, and be totally diſſolved at the date of this ſhort Life; eſpecially if he conſider withall, that theſe Powers and Capacities, which we have ſhewn Man to be endued with, do not only put him upon the Thoughts, and Expectations, and Deſires of another ſtate; but render him marvellouſly fit for it, and capable of it; inſomuch that ſeveral of the nobleſt of theſe endowments are wholly in vain, if there be no ſuch thing, and that a Man died as the Beaſts do.

Beſides all this, doth not every Man that hath Eyes in his Head, to obſerve the admirable Structure of the World, conclude that it muſt be the Workmanſhip of a God, and he a great, a wiſe, a good, and a juſt Being; and can he think ſo, and not reſolve there muſt be a great Neceſſity of, and Reality in Religion? that is, in the reverend Obſervance of that great Majeſty that deſerves it, and who hath both made us capable of performing it to him, and obliged us thereunto.

Now if all, or but any part of this be true, who is ſo mad as to have no Concern for this God, Religion, and another World, and who is there that having any Concern for them, can chuſe but think fit to make it ſome part of his Buſineſs, the Employment of ſome part of his time, and the Subject of his moſt ſerious Debates. Hath any Man a moſt important Cauſe *ſub Judice*, and his Trial drawing on, and doth he never think of it,

or diſcourſe this Caſe with his Friends? Hath any Man a great Eſtate in a foreign Countrey, or a huge Patrimony in Reverſion, and never ſpeaks of it? Hath any Man either a conſiderable Friend or a formidable Enemy, and never expreſſes himſelf concerning the one or the other? Surely therefore ſeeing Religion imports all theſe Concernments, a Man may find thoſe that will diſcourſe with him on the point.

Phil. I readily conſent to you that the Buſineſs of Religion is a moſt ſerious Affair, and worthy of the greateſt Conſideration; but beſides (as I have ſaid) there are very few will correſpond with a Man in diſcourſe about it: To tell you truly, I am ſomewhat of Opinion, that it is not fit for that kind of Treatment. As it is a ſacred ſo it is a ſecret thing, tranſacted only between God and a Man's own Conſcience, and therefore is rather the Theme of a Man's Thoughts, the ſolitary Employment of his own Heart; and ſo fit to be kept up in the Cloſet of his Breaſt, and not ſo proper matter for Diſcourſe.

Sebaſt. And I as readily yield to you, Dear *Phil.* that the Soul and Spirit of Religion is very retired and inward; and ſo inacceſſible to other Men, that they can neither ſee it, nor judge of it. But tho' the firſt Source and Springs of it lie very deep, yet why the Streams of it ſhould not iſſue forth, both in Words and Actions, I cannot comprehend. I have read of a ſort of Men about the apoſtolick times, called *Gnoſticks*, who gave out that it was ſufficient to retain an inward Belief, and a right Senſe of the Chriſtian Religion in their Minds and Hearts, although they never made Profeſſion of the Faith with their Mouths, nor practiſed the Laws of it in their Lives and Converſations. This I look upon as an hypocritical Artifice of theirs, to

Religion reſts not in the Mind only.

the end that they might make a saving bargain of Christianity; a Device to sleep in a whole Skin, and neither run any hazards, nor put themselves to any difficulties for Conscience sake; and if they got nothing by *Christ Jesus*, they thought they would be sure to lose nothing by him. But as I am very confident a Man of your Sincerity can harbour none of their Designs, so I assure my self what you have said is not upon their Principles. Yet I must tell you, when the Apostle levell'd a blow at them, he reach'd your Fancy also; for he saith expressly, *With the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made to Salvation.*

Phil. O pardon me, Sir! I make no Question, but that when a Man is called to make profession of his Faith, and to discover what Religion he is of, then to dissemble is to betray it, and to be silent on such a critical Occasion is to revolt and apostatize from it; and in that sense (I take it) another Apostle hath required us, *To render to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us*, &c. As if he had said, Be not asham'd of your Persuasion, but own and defend your Religion, at the greatest and most adverse Tribunals where-ever it shall be impeach'd. But this is not the Case: We are not now speaking of what must be done upon an authoritative Inquisition into our Consciences, or in times of Persecution: But what is to be done in times of Peace, and in common Conversation: And then, and there I am still of Opinion that, at least, it is not an express duty to talk of Religion.

Sebast. Nor do I differ from you therein. For I do not assert it as an universal duty to make Religion the matter of our Discourse: But my meaning is, that it will exceedingly become us to do so sometimes. And I verily assure my self, that he

e that hath a quick ſenſe of God upon his Mind, ill have ſavory Expreſſions of him ſometimes pon ordinary Occaſions, (if a fooliſh modeſty do ot to too much overcome him) as well as witneſs good Confeſſion in times of Perſecution: For, s our Saviour ſaid, (in the Paſſage I mentioned efore) *Out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth peaketh.* And it ſeems to me more eaſily conceivable, that there ſhould be a great Fire without ny Smoke, or a great Light without any Heat, than hat ſuch a Man as is inwardly principled with the ear and love of God ſhould be wholly tongue-ty'd, r be either able or willing altogether to ſtifle and uppreſs his Sentiments. *Can a Man carry Fire in is Boſom,* (ſaid the wiſe Man) *and not be burnt?* uch an holy Fervour as I ſpeak of will aſſuredly oth ſeek and find a vent for it ſelf, and break ut, upon all fitting Occaſions, in reverend and ffectionate Expreſſions: By which means a Man, n the firſt place, eaſes his own Breaſt; and beides, thus this holy Fire not only preſerves it ſelf rom extinction, but propagates it ſelf alſo, warmng and inflaming others.

You have heard, I ſuppoſe, of an odd Superſtiion among the *Jews*, who out of a pretended Reverence to the Name of God, and to preſerve t from Profanation, (as they ſuppoſed) ſo long orbad the common pronunciation of it, till at ength, by the intermiſſion of uſing it, they had uite forgotten how to pronounce it. And thus I m afraid it will fare with Religion, if Men ſhould out of I know not what conceit) forbear all Diſourſe of God and another World; the reſult would e, that in time both would be orgotten. Nor is it (as you eem to imagine) only times of erſecution that ought to rowſe p our Spirits, and call for Expreſſions of our

Religious Diſcourſe as neceſſary in times of Proſperity, as of Perſecution.

Zeal; for the Road of buſineſs, the ſucceſſively flowing Tide of variety of Entertainments in this World, the ſoft Charms of pleaſant Recreations, the Blandiſhments of continual Proſperity, and the Ruſt upon our Minds contracted by lying ſtill in Eaſe and Security, do more endanger the ſtate of Religion, than thoſe trying times you ſpeak of. And therefore Atheiſm is well known to be the Weed that thrives moſt in the beſt Weather. The Seed that was ſown upon ſtony Ground fell away when the hot Sun ſcorched it, becauſe it had no depth of Earth: But that which was ſown among the Thorns was choak'd too, tho' the Soil was never ſo good: In a word, ſtormy Weather in the Church may tempt Men to be falſe and treacherous, and Renegadoes, but I believe it never made an Atheiſt; that and Prophaneneſs are the ill fruit of Proſperity. So that you ſee there is need that the Spirit of Piety ſhould exert it ſelf as well in the one Seaſon, as in the other.

Neither will the publickly ſtated times, or forms and exerciſes of Religion ſufficiently ſecure it againſt this danger, without ſuch voluntary efforts and ſallies of it as we are ſpeaking of: For in regard God is not to be ſeen, and the world is before us; the World to come is at diſtance, and the preſent World at hand; ill Examples are numerous, and good ones few and rare: And, in a word, we dwell in ſo cold a Region, that we had need not only to uſe a great deal of exerciſe, but frequently to rub up one another. Therefore as *Socrates* is ſaid to have brought down Philoſophy *(è Cœlo in Urbes)* from ſpeculation to practice, from high notions to the common affairs of Life; ſo it ſeems neceſſary to us, not only to be religious at Church, and devout in our Cloſets, but to allow it a ſhare in our daily and ordinary converſe.

Phil.

Phil. Nay, if you be for that, what think you of a demure ſort of People amongſt us, that, as if their Tongues were tipp'd with Religion, will be always canting in Scripture Phraſe. Theſe Men ſeem to think it prophane to ſpeak intelligibly, and in the common Language; and account a *Jewiſh* kind of Gibberiſh to be the peculiar *Shibboleth* of the godly party: And ſome of them arrive at ſuch a pitch, either of Hypocriſy or Melancholy, (I am loth to pronounce whether) that (upon the matter) they allow no other Diſcouſe to be lawful, but what hath a Tincture of Religion. Now, for my part, I look upon theſe People as very abſurd and ridiculous, and therefore I hope you do not intend to give them Countenance in what you are ſaying.

Of Hypocritical Canting.

Sebaſt. So far from it, *Phil.* that I account the former of the two ſorts of Men which you ſpeak of, to be no better than a Generation of nauſeous Phariſees, foraſmuch as nothing betrays Hypocriſy ſo much as over-doing; and by that Courſe of theirs they render Religion loathſome and ridiculous, and tempt Men to think it all Trick and Cheat. And for the other, they ſeem to be a pitiable, but crack-brain'd ſort of Men, who render Religion very uncomfortable themſelves, and, indeed, impracticable and impoſſible. God knows we are not Angels, but Men; and have Concerns for the preſent World, as well as for the other; and conſequently, it can be no Fault, but a juſt Duty, to take care of them; and, in order thereto, to deliberate, to take Advice, and to diſcourſe about them.

And this I am ſo confident of, that I verily believe the Apoſtle, when he forbids *that any corrupt Communication ſhall proceed out of our Mouths*, and enjoins *that it be ſuch as is good to the uſe of*

edifying, intended we ſhould interpret the latter Expreſſion by the former, *viz.* that inſtead of rotten and filthy Talk, we ſhould tend ſo earneſtly to the contrary, that we might turn the Stream of Men's Diſcourſe to that which is virtuous and profitable. And when he adds, *That it may miniſter Grace to the Hearers*, I think he requires, that every Thing which I have been recommending to you; namely, that we ſhould take all fair Opportunities of bringing Religion into plea and of ſuggeſting good Meditations to one another. But I can by no means think he reſtrains all Communication to that Subject, provided that which is about other Matters be not lewd nor fooliſh, but ſavoury and ingenious, uſeful and pertinent. And this I am the more confirmed in by another Paſſage of the ſame Apoſtle, where he directs, that *our Speech be ſeaſoned with Grace, as with Salt.* Which, as I underſtand it, imports as if he ſaid, that our moſt common Converſation ſhould have ſome Reliſh of our Religion; not be wholly religious, no more than our Meat ſhould be all Salt; but ſeaſon'd with it.

Common Diſcourſe lawful.

Col. iv. 6.

Moreover, when our Saviour fore-warns us, *That for every idle Word that Men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an Account at the Day of Judgment*, I can by no means think his meaning was, that every Word that hath not immediate relation to Religion ſhould be acounted idle, and, as ſuch, incurr Damnation. Far be ſuch an Interpretation from the merciful and condeſcending Laws of our Saviour. If this were ſo, Chriſtianity was a moſt anxious thing, and the Lives of Men muſt be perpetually vexed with Scrupuloſity. But I take it, he intended only to repreſent to us, that the Judgment to come ſhall be very exact and particular,

lar, ſo as to take notice, not only of our Actions, and the greater Paſſages of our Lives, but that our very Words alſo ſhall come into Eſtimate and Conſideration.

You ſee therefore I am ſo far from countenancing either an hypocritical Cant, or a ſuperſtitious Melancholy, that I do not think Religion ought importunely to thruſt it ſelf into Converſation to the Excluſion of every thing beſides it ſelf; but that it have place in our Debates; and where there is room for choice, there it is my Opinion that we give it alſo the Precedence.

Phil. Well, ſo far we are agreed: But, I pray, give me leave to go a little farther with you. What kind of Religious Conference is it you would be at? Would you have Men enter into Diſputes about Divine Matters?

Of Diſputes in Religion, the Vanity and Miſchiefs of them.

This I the rather ask, becauſe there is another ſort of Men (beſides thoſe we now ſpeak of) who ſeem to be mighty zealous of Religion; but their Heat breaks out wholly this way, and they fill the place wherever they are with Noiſe and Clamour, with Duſt and Smoak: Nothing can be ſaid in their preſence, but inſtantly a Controverſy is ſtarted, the Cudgels are taken up, and to it they go: Scarcely any Body is Orthodox enough for them; for they ſpin ſo fine a Thread, and have ſuch Cobweb-Divinity, that the leaſt Bruſh againſt it is not to be endur'd: And yet withal, they are as poſitive and decretal in their Aſſertions, that the Pope himſelf is no body to them. One would think they were Privy Counſellors of Heaven, they define with ſo great Confidence what will, and what will not pleaſe God; and damn to the Pit of Hell all that come not up exactly to their Definitions and Determinations. Theſe, I aſſure you, are Men

that bear a great Port in the World, therefore I would fain know your Opinion of them.

Sebaſt. Truly, *Phil.* I have no Opinion of them at all; I fanſie neither their Faith, nor their Charity; the one I account to be a great deal too big, and the other as much too little.

Phil. Agreed again: And now I'll tell you my Thoughts a little more fully on this point: I have always look'd upon this diſputative Religiouſneſs, as no better than a new-faſhion'd Knight-Errantry, which puts Men continually upon queſt of Adventures, and makes Monſters of every Wind-mill, that comes in their way. For theſe Men if there do but happen to be an inconſiderate Expreſſion let fall by any body, preſently raiſe ſuch a Tragedy upon it, as if Faith conſiſted wholly of Punctilio's (or, as if you ſhould ſay, a Line was made up of Points) and that every petty Opinion were of moment enough to overturn the World. The contrary whereof I take to be ſo true, that I ſuſpect whether that be of any moment in Religion which admits of Diſputes; for methinks it is not agreeable to the Goodneſs of God to ſuffer any thing, of that univerſal Concern to all Men, to remain very obſcure and controverſial. I ſhould think therefore this knotty kind of Timber never fit for Edification. In plain Truth, (if you will pardon a rude Similitude) I fanſie theſe great Maſters of Diſpute to be like the ordinary Profeſſors of Rat-catching, who commonly draw more Vermine to the Place than they deſtroy; ſo theſe raiſe more Controverſies than they can decide, ſtart more Difficulties than they can aſſoil; and ſo beget Schiſms, gratify Pride, inflame Differences, and foment Heart-burnings amongſt Men, that might otherwiſe live peaceably together here, and, for ought I know, go to Heaven hereafter.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. Moſt ingeniouſly ſpoken, Dear *Phil.* and according to my very Heart. If I thought I could match your Wit, I would add, that whenever I ſee a Knot of theſe Diſputants together, it puts me in mind of a Story or Fable, which you will, of a Company of Apes that had gotten a Glow-worm amongſt them upon which they heaped Sticks and other combuſtible Matter; and laying their Heads together, blew with all their might, as hoping to make ſome ſtrange Improvement of that little ſhining Particle: But when they have done all they can, are neither able to increaſe the Light, nor much leſs to warm themſelves by it. So theſe buſy diſputing Wits, after all their bluſtering, neither bring any uſeful Truth to Light, nor warm their own or other Men's Breaſts with any Spark of true Piety or Charity; but contrariwiſe frequently obſcure the one, and extinguiſh the other.

It is not therefore diſputing in Religion that I would provoke you to; but the Improvement of the indiſputable Rules of it, *viz.* to make your ſelf, and thoſe you converſe with, ſenſible of the vital Principles and Powers of Chriſtianity; not to chafe one another into a Paſſion, but to rub up one another's Sentiments, and mutually to warm one another's Hearts with Devotion. By wiſe and affectionate Applications to beget an equal Fervour of Spirit. And in a Word, that when Friends are met together, they ſhould, like Flint and Steel, raiſe both Light and Heat by their mutual and amicable Colliſions.

And why, I pray you, dear *Phil.* ſhould not Religion have its turn in our Converſation? What Reaſon can be given that pious Men ſhould not diſcourſe as freely and ſavourily of holy things, as they, or other Men, concerning common Affairs? Why ſhould our leſſer Concerns for this World,

our ſecular Buſineſs, be the only Subject of our Communication? Why, when ſome talk of their Trades, their Pleaſures, and of News, and the like, ſhould we not talk of our Callings, as we are Chriſtians, of the Intereſt of our Souls, and the Hopes in another World? Why may not we diſcourſe of our heavenly Countrey, whither we are going, as well as other Men buſy themſelves about foreign Countries, which, perhaps, they never ſaw, nor ever ſhall be concerned in?

You your ſelf acknowledge Religion to deſerve the moſt ſerious and attentive Conſideration of our Minds; and upon the ſame Account (if you be conſiſtent with your ſelf) you will be induced to believe it the moſt worthy and commendable Subject of Diſcourſe, as having all thoſe Advantages that can recommend any Subject to the Debate of ingenious Men; as it were eaſy to make appear, if it were neceſſary.

Phil. Sir, I value your Judgment, but muſt make uſe of my own; if therefore it be not too troubleſome to you, let me intreat you to make out that more fully to me; and then I promiſe you I will either comply with the Reaſons you give, or will ſhew you mine to the contrary.

Sebaſt. With all my Heart, Sir: And, to do it with as much Brevity as may be, I will deſire you to conſider, in the firſt place, whether this Subject, Religion, does not contain in it the moſt noble and excellent Points of Enquiry, and conſequently, be not the moſt worthy, not only to take up the Affections, but to exerciſe the Wits of Men upon: Such as, for Inſtance, about the Nature and Attributes of God; the Wiſdom of that Providence that manages and governs the World, the Nature of Spirits, and particularly of the Soul of Man; of Conſcience,

Religion the nobleſt Subject of Diſcourſe.

Conſcience, and Freedom of Will; of the Nature and Obligation of Laws; of the Grounds of Faith, and the Efficacy of it; of the Nature and Succeſs of Repentance; of Redemption, and the way of propitiating God to Man; of the Judgment to come, the Reſurrection of the Body and eternal Life; with abundance more of the like Nature: Points all vaſtly great and copious, profound and difficult; yet equally neceſſary and diſcoverable; ſuch as are able to ſtir up and provoke the greateſt Capacities, and yet invite and encourage the meaneſt: In a word, ſuch things, as that there is nothing elſe within the whole Sphere of Knowledge, that either requires or deſerves ſuch ſerious Debates.

Now how trivial and childiſh a thing were it, whilſt we have all theſe wiſe and conſequent Matters to treat of, to be taken up only with Dogs and Horſes, with Drinks and Sauces, with Faſhions and News, (as is too commonly the Practice?)

And if you will pleaſe to conſider well the aforeſaid Particulars, and eſpecially if you make trial of the Courſe I am adviſing you, you will find theſe Subjects every whit as pleaſant and delightful, as they are neceſſary and important. *Pleaſantneſs of Religious Conference.*

For what can be imagined able to miniſter more Delight, than the lively Repreſentation of another World, and eternal Life, when Men modeſtly reaſon together, and endeavour to affect one another's Hearts with the Certainty and unſpeakable Felicity of living for ever? Of the raviſhing Contentment of enjoying everlaſting Friendſhip; of being out of the reach of Fate or Chance; out of the Sphere of Mortality, Sickneſs and Pain, Care and Vexation; of being exempted from all Weakneſs, Sillineſs, Paſſion, and Infirmity; of being exalted a-

bove

bove all Temptation, and ſecured againſt all poſſibility of Apoſtaſy: If Diſcourſe of this Nature doth not affect a Man beyond all other, it muſt be becauſe either he hath not the Senſe of a Man, or not the Faith of a Chriſtian.

Or ſuppoſe Men ſhould take a Subject ſomewhat lower, and confer together about the Providence of God, that governs the preſent World: What a beautiful thing is it to obſerve all the variety of ſecond Cauſes to move in a juſt Order under the firſt, towards certain and uniform Ends, the Glory of God, and Good of Men! And that though the divine Wiſdom may loſe and confound us in that admirable Maze it ſeems to make, yet there is nothing defective or redundant in the whole World, no room for Chance, nothing unforeſeen, no croſs Accident that hinders the Projections; the ſame Deſign is all along carried on, and at laſt certainly attained: But eſpecially, if we confine our Contemplations of divine Providence to that more peculiar Object of his, his Church, it will become yet more viſible, and more comfortable; where, if we wiſely confer Times paſt with the preſent, and view the whole Proceſs, we ſhall find that even Schiſms, Hereſies, Perſecutions, and the greateſt Calamities of the Church, tend to its Advantage in Concluſion. But, above all, that which comes neareſt to a Man, and muſt needs affect him moſt in the Affair of Providence, is, that thereby he finds himſelf under the Protection of a mighty Being, that nothing befalls him without the Conſent of his great Patron, that he is not left to himſelf to ſcuffle with ill Fortune and ſecond Cauſes as well as he can; but he is the Charge of God-Almighty; the Favourite of Heaven. This, certainly, is highly pleaſant and ſatisfactory, above any thing in this World.

Or

Or if we go lower yet, and make the Subject of our Diſcourſe to be about Peace of Conſcience, of the Bravery of a Victory over a Man's Paſſions or Temptations, of the unſpeakable Comfort and Satisfaction in doing good; any of theſe will afford us an Entertainment beyond the Flavour of Wine, or the odd Variety of Chance in a Game; and indeed, (to ſpeak to the Point) above all other Subjects of Diſcourſe and Converſation. And although it be true that there is none of theſe, but a Man may contemplate with great Satisfaction by himſelf alone, and in Solitude; yet as all ſocial Exerciſes of the Body are more refreſhing than thoſe that are ſolitary, ſo it is here; the Comfort that reſults from thoſe Contemplations is doubled and multiplied by Reflexion in friendly Conferences: And all this together, ſhall be my firſt Argument by which I recommend Diſcourſe of Religion. What think you of this, *Philander?*

Phil. I think very well of it: But, I pray you, let me hear out the whole Cauſe, and then I'll give my Anſwer.

Sebaſt. Why then my ſecond Plea for religious Diſcourſe, is, from the Conſideration that it is far the more ſafe, prudent, and inoffenſive Matter of Communication; and that in ſeveral Reſpects. In the firſt place, it kindles no Coals, ſtirs up no Strife, inflames no body's Choler, and touches upon no Man's Intereſt or Reputation. You cannot talk of your ſelf without Vanity or Envy; you can hardly talk of your Neighbours, without ſome ſuſpicious Reflexion; nor of thoſe that are fartheſt off, but you are in Danger that ſome body preſent may be concerned for them, as being of their Family or Acquaintance: It is very difficult to talk of News, but you will make your ſelf of ſome Party or other; and of Opinions without giving

Religious Diſcourſe, the moſt prudent.

giving Offence where you did not intend it; and you can ſcarcely ſpeak of your Governours and Superiors, ſo as to avoid all Imputation either of Flattery or Pragmaticalneſs. But here you may talk ſecurely, and have this Aſſurance, that if you profit no body, you ſhall hurt no body; if you do not benefit others, you ſhall not prejudice your ſelf. And then, in the ſecond place, and in conſequence of the former, this kind of Diſcourſe will invite no Eve-droppers to liſten and carry Tales of what paſſed amongſt Friends in their Families and Privacies. For although there be hardly any Place ſo inacceſſible, or any Retirement ſo ſacred and inviolable, as to be a ſufficient Sanctuary againſt this peſtilent Sort of Vermin, yet beſides that Matters of Religion afford them the leaſt Hold or Handle; the diſcourſing gravely of it, is the moſt effectual Charm in the World to lay them; ſo that they ſhall either not be able, or not be willing to miſreport you. To which add, in the third Place, that this Courſe is one of the moſt effectual and unexceptionable Ways of ridding our ſelves of the Company of impertinent People; which I reckon no ſmall Advantage of this kind of Converſation: For this grave and ſerious Way will certainly either make them better, or make them weary of our Company; that is, we ſhall either gain them, or gain our Time from them; the leaſt of which two is very deſirable. And this is the Effect of my ſecond Plea for pious Diſcourſe.

Religious Communication Genteel.

I will trouble you but with one more, and that is, from the Genteelneſs of this Way of Converſation: It is the moſt human, civil and obliging Way of treating Men, and therefore moſt becoming a Gentleman. We account it ſome Degree of Rudeneſs, to talk *French* or *Latin*, or any other Language, which the Company in which we are do

do not underſtand: For it looks as if we were either jealous of them, and therefore would not have them know what we ſay to others; or elſe it is as if we had a mind to upbraid their Ignorance, who correſpond with us in ſuch a Tongue. And, methinks, as it is uſually accounted a piece of Pedantry, and an Argument of Defect of generous Education, for a Student to quote his Authors, to talk in ſcholaſtick Phraſe, and to vent his metaphyſical Notions in the Company of Gentlemen; ſo neither is it very decorous and civil on the other ſide, to be talking altogether in the peculiar Phraſe of Faulconry and Hunting in the Company of a Student: And it ſavours either of great Defect (of other Matter of Diſcourſe) in our ſelves, or of great Contempt and Inſolence towards thoſe others ſo treated. The Law of Civility is, to be obliging and condeſcending, to give fair Play and Scope to all we converſe with: Now nothing doth this like to religious Diſcourſe, foraſmuch as this being every Man's Calling and Concern, there is no Man but is, or ought to be preſumed to be, in ſome meaſure skilful at it. When we talk of that we talk ſo as we may all talk; we parly of that which every Man's Profeſſion and Intereſt obliges him to conſider, and which every Man's Conſcience admoniſhes him of; and we ſpeak in the true univerſal Dialect, which every Man underſtands.

And this ſhall be my whole Apology at preſent for religious Conference: I could ſay ſeveral things more in the Caſe, but I will do like a wary Advocate, and reſerve them to reply to your Objections. And now, dear *Phil.* What think you upon the whole Matter?

Phil. What ſhould I ſay, or what can I ſay, but that a good Cauſe hath happened upon a good Advocate; a Cauſe able to make an ordinary Man eloquent,

eloquent, and Eloquence able to make a very indifferent Cauſe paſſable?

Sebaſt. Thank you for nothing, *Phil.* Do you think I will be put off with a ſtale Complement? I have, I think, demonſtrated, that religious Diſcourſe is both the moſt manly and rational, the moſt pleaſant and comfortable, the moſt prudent and wary; and to all this, the moſt genteel and obliging. Deal now like a Friend and a Gentleman with me; tell me what Flaws you have obſerved in my Reaſoning, or what Objections you have to what I have ſaid.

Phil. To deal plainly and faithfully with you, and my ſelf too, I think your Reaſons are unanſwerable; and I have nothing to object, but to what you ſaid in the laſt place, about the Genteelneſs of this Way of Converſation; and that is only this, Methinks you talk in this Particular, as if you came out of a Cloyſter, or rather out of another World; for your Diſcourſe is not calculated for the Age we live in: Alas! the World is not at the paſs you ſuppoſe; you converſe with Books which fill you with fine Speculations; but had you read Men as much as I have done, you would find, as I ſaid before, that it would be a very difficult thing to get any Body to keep you Company, at that rate, notwithſtanding all the Arguments you have given, or can give for it. You have read (and ſo have I) of one *Nicodemus*, that came to our Saviour, on purpoſe to confer with him on the Buſineſs of another World; but it is obſerved he came by Night, as if he was aſhamed of his Enterprize: And, beſides his Name is, upon this Occaſion, (for ought I know) become a by-word, and Name of Reproach, to this Day. And we have heard of ſome other Perſons, who, in great Agonies of Mind, have been inquiſitive into thoſe Affairs, and made Religion the principal

principal Theme of their Diſcourſe: But then was then, and now is now; thoſe Men would now be ſuſpected as not well in their Wits that affected ſo antick a Garb: Inſomuch that even Divines themſelves, who, for the Honour of their Profeſſion, and upon Account of the Nature of their Office and Studies, may better be allowed to entertain ſuch Diſcourſes; yet (whether it be out of Modeſty, or Deference to the Humour of the Age) it is eaſily obſerveable, that they generally decline the Way you recommend, and maintain Converſation at the rate of other Men. Judge you therefore, whether, at this Time of Day, if a Man in health would talk ſo he would not be counted an hypochondriacal Perſon; or, eſpecially, if a Gentleman ſhould uſe it, he would not be wondered at as uncouth and unfaſhionable.

About Prophane Diſcourſe.

Nay, that is not the worſt of the Caſe neither: For the now modiſh Way of treating Religion (if by chance it come in the way) is either to find Flaws in it, and by ſceptical Sophiſms to undermine the very Foundations of it, or elſe by Drollery to burleſque and render it ridiculous. To talk malapertly and ſcurrilouſly againſt it, and now and then to break a Jeſt upon God Almighty, is an Argument of Wit: But to ſpeak gravely and reverently, is dull and tedious beyond meaſure; the ſure Sign of a formal Fop or a Phanatick.

Sebaſt. God forbid! Though I know you underſtand the World better than I do, becauſe (as you wittily upbraided me) my Converſation is moſt with the dead; yet I am in good hope you are now miſtaken, and that the State of the living is not ſo prodigiouſly bad as you repreſent it. I know there are a ſort of Tap-inſpired Debauchees (whoſe Wit is broached with the Hogſhead, and runs on tilt with it) that love to put Tricks upon

every Man, and every thing that is graver and wiſer than themſelves. Nor do I ſo much wonder at it, (conſidering the Men) foraſmuch as if Religion be true, they muſt expect to be damned; and if it obtain its juſt Veneration, they muſt expect to be the Scorn of Mankind. It is not ſtrange therefore if they (conſulting their own Intereſt) either undermine it or blaſpheme it, that they may have their Revenge upon it beforehand. But take Courage, *Philander*, for theſe Men's Tongues is no Slander; neither upon due Conſideration, is there more of Wit than of Virtue in their Ribaldry.

As for the more cunning part of them who will needs be ſceptical, and think to give Proof that they have more Wit than other Men, only becauſe they have leſs Faith and Modeſty; who knows not how eaſy a thing it is to carp and make Objections? And that a trifling captious Coxcomb can ask more Queſtions than a wiſe Man can anſwer? As any Man may pull down faſter than another can build up. It is one Sign of a good Judgment to be able to ask a diſcreet and pertinent Queſtion; and another to diſcern what Satisfaction is fit to be expected; and then, in the third Place, there is ſuch a Virtue as modeſtly to ſit down and reſt ſatisfied with ſuch an Anſwer as the Nature of the thing will admit of; all which thoſe captious Hypercriticks are deſtitute of.

Of Drollery.

And then, for the prophane Droll: Every Man of Senſe and good Manners knows, that Wit without Bounds is the very Definition of Scurrility; and that it is an eaſy thing to pleaſe a Man's ſelf in the one, if he have no Regard to the other, but will let fly at every thing that comes in his way. For my part, I look upon it as every whit as great an inſtance of Dulneſs as of Impiety, to need ſo large a Scope for Wit as theſe Men allow

ow themſelves. A good and true Wit will find Matter enough within the Bounds of Sobriety; nd not think himſelf ſtraiten'd though he ſpare God and Religion. The Men therefore you ſpeak f are like blind *Bayard*, bold and dull; and if hey now and then happen upon ſomething more han ordinary, who knows but the Devil may help hem to it, who is always very ready to aſſiſt in his Caſe?

Therefore, my good Friend, ſetting both theſe inds of Men aſide, who are not the Copy, but he very Scandal of the Age they live in; let us onſider impartially what elſe there is, able to diſ-ourage ſuch a Way of converſing as we are up-n. I have made it plain already, that all the Rea-on in the World is for it, and it is as certain that here are no Laws againſt it; nor doth Authority much as diſcountenance it in the leaſt. Beſides, here is, I am confident, as quick a Senſe of Vir-ue and Piety in the preſent Times, as in the beſt Times of our Fore-fathers. And if there be ſome ewd and profligate Men againſt it; yet there are thers, and thoſe of the beſt Quality, who think ſo far from unbecoming their Rank, that nothing more ſavoury and acceptable to them than pious Diſcourſe. And ſome of theſe, as I am informed, meet at one another's Houſes uſually every Week, r as often as their Occaſions permit; and there, hilſt they walk in the Garden, or ſit together by he Fire, (according as the Weather invites them) hey make it their Buſineſs to re-inforce upon one nother's Minds the great Principles of Chriſtia-ity, to affect their Hearts mutually with the Con-quences of them. And when this is done, (they y) they return home as much raiſed in their Spi-ts, and cheered in their very Countenances, as he moſt jolly Good-Fellows do from their merry Aſſignations.

Phil. This is a pretty piece of News you tell me. But, I pray you, (by the way) do you know any of these Men well? Are they not Conventiclers? I tell you plainly, I suspect this Practice looks a-squint that way.

Sebast. No, very far from it, I assure you. Those I know of them are Persons most observant of the Laws of their Countrey, constant and devout Frequenters of their Parish-Church, true Friends of the Clergy, zealously affected towards the Common-Prayers, and all the Offices of the Liturgy; and do as much abominate and discountenance every Instance of that factious, gadding, gossipping Pretence of Godliness, as any Sort of Men whatsoever do, or ought to do; but having a quick Sense of Piety, and a great Concern upon them for another World, they endeavour by the aforesaid means to preserve and improve this Temper in themselves, and to propagate it to others: And this they do the more securely, as being condemned by no Law; and the more innocently as condemning none of those that do not imitate them.

But I do not mention this particular Club of Persons, with intention to make them a Precedent for all others; for, besides that their Custom is only voluntarily taken up, and upon no Apprehensions of any necessary Obligation upon them so to do; for then it would be a great Burthen upon the Consciences of Men; there are also several Inconveniences not unlikely to attend the Practice, if not prudently managed, which I need not name. That therefore which I aimed at in the mention of these Mens Usage, was (amongst other Proofs) to shew, that the World was not so abandoned of true Zeal and Piety as you suggested, that prophane Discourse hath not so universally obtained, nor that godly Conference was so antiquated and exploded, but that a Gentleman might still adventure to be

found at it, without Impeachment of his Prudence or Dignity.

And moreover, I humbly conceive, that by how much the more there is of Truth in your Obſervation, by ſo much the more are all ſerious and ſenſible Men bound to put to their Endeavour to turn the Stream of Converſation from Froth and Folly to this great and important Concern. For, if this be out of faſhion, the more is the Shame; and it is a thouſand pities but that we ſhould ſtrive to bring it into faſhion, if it were but to run down that prophane Humour you ſpeak of: And eſpecially to repair the Diſhonour done to the divine Majeſty by thoſe ſcurrilous Libertines, who, with equal Madneſs and Folly, let their Tongues run riot againſt him.

More Arguments for religious Conference.

What! ſhall we be meally-mouthed in a good Cauſe, when they are impudent in a bad one? Shall we be aſhamed to own God, when they defy him? Is God ſo inconſiderable a Being, that we dare not ſtand by him? Are Piety and Virtue things to be bluſhed at? Is eternal Salvation become ſo trivial a thing, that we ſhould be unconcerned about it? Do we yield the Cauſe to theſe half-witted Profligates? Do we acknowledge the Goſpel to be indeed ridiculous? Or do we confeſs our ſelves the verieſt Cowards in the World; and judge our ſelves unworthy of eternal Life? For ſhame, let us be ſo far from being either cow'd or byaſs'd by ſuch Examples, that we reſolve to make better where we cannot find them. Why ſhould we think ſo meanly of our ſelves, as to follow only, and not to lead? In a Word, why may not we begin a good Faſhion, rather that fall in with a bad one?

Beſides, I perſuade my ſelf, this will be no very hard thing to do, if we conſider the Authority

and Majeſty of ſincere and generous Piety, and the Guilt and Baſe-ſpiritedneſs of Vice and Prophaneneſs. If we be ſoft and timorous, that grows rampant and intolerable; but if Virtue ſhine out in its own Rays, it dazles and baffles all thoſe Birds of Night. If Men will be perſuaded to aſſert their own Principles manfully, to talk of God worthily and couragiouſly, the verieſt Ruffians will preſently be gagg'd and tongue ty'd: As in Conjuration, (they ſay) name but God, and the Devil vaniſhes; ſo enter reſolutely into pious Conference, and it will preſently lay all the Oaths, and Blaſphemies, and ſcurrilous Talk of thoſe deſperate Wretches.

And (by the way) that is the moſt genteel, and alſo the moſt effectual way of reproving that kind of Perſons; namely, to deal with them as Scholars deal by one another; when any one ſpeaks falſe *Latin*, they only repeat it after him in true *Latin*, and as it ought to be; ſo here, let us ſpeak right things of God when they ſpeak amiſs, and there needs no more to damp them; they will either turn on your ſide, and ſpeak as you do, or leave the Field to you.

This, this, *Philander*, therefore is the only way to mend the World, and without this it will hardly ever be done. It is not good Books and Preaching that will retund a prophane Humour; for ſuch Perſons will either not read and hear them, or not conſider them: Nor is it Prayer and Faſting too that will caſt out this deaf (but not dumb) Devil. But when good Men are as bold as evil Men are impudent, I mean as openly good as the other are bad; when Piety is daring, and (if you will pardon the Expreſſion) hectors Lewdneſs out of countenance; then, I ſay, the World will, if not grow devout, yet, at leaſt, grow modeſt and civil towards Religion. When virtuous Men give Evidence that they believe themſelves; when they

demonſtrate that the Kingdom of God is not in Word only, but in Power; when their Principles and Pretenſions appear in their Spirit, their Diſcourſes, their whole Life and Converſation; when they continually breathe of God, and of Heaven.

And (to ſay no more) by this Courſe alſo a Man ſhall gain a worthy Reputation and Eſteem to himſelf: For, whereas a baſhful, puſillanimous, complying Humour, that will crouch to a Debauch for fear of Offence, and faulter and mince the matter of Prophaneneſs to curry Favour with lewd Men, ſhall be deſpiſed and trodden down by every Body; a brave, generous Aſſerter of his Principles and of God's Honour, that fills the Place and Company where he is with the ſweet Odours of Piety and Devotion, procures himſelf a Veneration wherever he goes; he looks like *Moſes*, when he came out of the Mount, his Face ſhines, and all Men ſee a Glory about him; inſomuch that thoſe that cannot find in their Hearts to imitate him, yet cannot chuſe but reverence and admire him.

Phil. I think your Mind is an inexhauſtible Fountain of Arguments on this Subject: Every Occaſion affords you a freſh Tide of Eloquence. Either you have very much ſtudied this Point, or it is wonderfully pregnant of its own Proofs: For my own part I cannot bear up againſt you. I confeſs, I thought, when we firſt enter'd on this Particular, it was impoſſible that I ſhould ever be of your Opinion therein; but now I am ſo far from having any thing material to object, that I proteſt I am clearly ſatisfied that it would be a very wiſe thing, and well worthy of our Endeavours, to bring it into Uſe and Practice: I mean as much as poſſibly we can, to exclude idle Tales and Drollery out of our Converſe, or at leaſt to confine

them to a narrower Compaſs, and ſo to make way for this great Affair of Religion.

But yet, let me tell you, though you have convinced me, you have not ſilenced others: There are thoſe will elude the Arguments they cannot anſwer, and expoſe what they are reſolved not to comply withal. They will ſay, this talking of Religion is a Mountebank Trick to impoſe upon the People; that it is a Deſign of Vain-glory, or an Artifice to ſeem better than we are. They will tell you that ſincerely good Men uſe to be modeſt and ſilent, and to enjoy their Senſe of Piety in ſecret. In ſhort, when you have ſaid all you can to recommend this way of Converſation, they will ſay it is not better than Puritaniſm, or Phanaticiſm; and having affixed ſuch a Name upon it, they will run both you and it down preſently.

Godly Diſcourſe not Phanatical, nor the Badge of any Sect.

Sebaſt. Hearty Thanks, dear *Phil.* for putting me in mind of that Danger, which otherwiſe I ſhould not have been aware of. I acknowledge, I am ſo far unskill'd in the World, that I was apt to think it was ſufficient to a Cauſe to be back'd with good Proofs; and that when a Buſineſs had recommended itſelf to the Reaſon and Conſcience of Men, the Work was done. I little thought Men muſt be wheedled into a Compliance with their own Judgments; and much leſs that they would be ſo diſingenuous towards themſelves, as to put a Cheat upon their own Senſes: Nor did I ſufficiently conſider the Power of Names, to make Good Evil, and Evil Good; and that the beſt thing in the World may be run down by the mere Blaſt of an odious Nick-name. Lord! What a venomous Breath hath common Fame, that it can change the Nature of things? What an huge *Leviathan* is vulgar

vulgar Opinion, that it ſhould be able to oppoſe itſelf to the beſt Reaſon of Mankind, and to God Almighty too? If this be ſo, who would exerciſe their Underſtandings, or dare to propound any generous thing to the World; and not rather ſet himſelf a-drift, to run with the Tide?

But yet this comforts me, that it looks like a Confeſſion of the inſuperable ſtrength of my Arguments when Men reſort to ſuch Subterfuges: It is a ſign they dare not encounter me on the ſquare, that uſe ſuch foul play; and that Men are deſtitute of Reaſon, when they betake themſelves to Libels and Reproaches.

Let us then reſume a little Courage; it may be we ſhall conquer at laſt, becauſe our Adverſaries deſpair of an honourable Victory. That which I contend for (you know) is this, That it becomes Men to take all fit and fair Occaſions to ſpeak worthily of God, and to make Advantage of friendly Converſation, towards the Improvement of one another in Morals, as well as in ſecular, or any other Concerns. And can any one be ſo abſurdly malicious, as to call this Phanaticiſm? Doth that deſerve the odious Name of a Party, which is the great and univerſal Concern of all Mankind? Is that to be accounted the peculiar *Shibboleth* of a Sect, which ſpeaks a good Man and a Chriſtian? Is that to be made a Mark of Infamy, which the beſt Men in the World wear as a Badge of Honour? Are we minded that this word Phanaticiſm ſhould have the Power of an Oſtraciſm, and put a Diſgrace upon Men for being too good?

If Men, in their Intercourſes and Communications, deliberated about ſetting forth of ſome new God, or at leaſt of ſome new Religion, there were juſt Cauſe of ſuch an odious Imputation: But to take an opportunity to ſpeak of the true God, and the old Religion, gravely and piouſly, it cannot

be that this ſhould be Puritaniſm, unleſs it be ſo to be in earneſt in Religion, which God forbid. Sure it is not the Character of any mere Sect amongſt us to love God; and if it be not, then neither can it be ſo to talk of him affectionately, ſince the latter is the eaſie and natural Iſſue and Expreſſion of the former. *David*, I remember, call'd his Tongue his *Glory*: And is that alone, of all the Powers of Soul and Body, exempted from any Part in doing Honour to the Creator?

Are all Men Puritans when they are ſick, or upon their Death-beds? And yet then there are very few are ſo modiſh as to wave the Talk of Religion, or to talk lightly and drollingly of it. Either therefore all dying Men are Sectaries, or elſe they teach us then what we ought to practiſe at other times, if we be not unreaſonably careleſs and deſperate.

As for thoſe that are really Phanatick, and are continually canting in a loathſom manner of Religion, thoſe Parrots, that talk without any Senſe or Apprehenſion of what they ſay; or thoſe ricketty Phariſees, that are all Head, and Ears, and Tongue, but feeble in their Hands and Feet; that talk, but do nothing: let theſe be call'd Puritans or Phanaticks, or what Men pleaſe: But let no Diſhonour be reflected upon thoſe that underſtand and believe what they ſay, and live up to what they believe and profeſs. For, though it may pleaſe thoſe who have a mind to put a Slurr upon this Inſtance of real Piety which I am vindicating, to confound it with that other hypocritical Guiſe of it which I have now condemned, that ſo they may expoſe it to Contempt and Diſhonour; yet, as it is certain theſe two are as different Things as Sence and Nonſence, or as Life and Varniſh, ſo (impartial Men being Judges) that very Paint and Pageantry bears Evidence of the Excellency of that

that Sincerity which I am recommending. For, you know, Men do not uſe to counterfeit that which is of no value. Painted Beauty is a great argument of the Deſirableneſs of that which is true and native; ſo there is certainly a very deſerved Admiration of holy Diſcourſe, and a great Power and Charm in it; otherwiſe, it would never be ſo artificially pretended to by ſuch Men, nor eſpecially be ſufficient to give countenance (as we find it doth) to their ſiniſter Purpoſes and Deſigns. The World, I ſay, would not be ſo ſottiſh, as to be impoſed upon by Religious Cants; nor deſigning Hypocrites be ſo ſilly, as to go about to abuſe the World this way, if it were not an acknowledged Caſe, that there is a real Worth in that which they endeavour apiſhly to imitate. So that the Objections againſt us are unanſwerable Arguments for us; and we have great Aſſurance we ſhall carry our Cauſe, when our very Reproaches turn to our Honour.

Godly Conference an effectual way to ſupplant Phanaticiſm.

But what if, after all this, *Phil.* I ſhould take the boldneſs to aſſert, that ſuch holy Intercourſe as I am ſpeaking of, and eſpecially under thoſe Conditions and Qualifications I have put upon it, is ſo far from Phanaticiſm, or Puritaniſm, or any Sectarian *Odium*, that, on the contrary, (if the Practice of it became general amongſt good Men) it would be the moſt effectual way in the World to daſh thoſe formal Diſguiſes out of Countenance, and to put all Phanatical Tricks out of all Requeſt and Reputation. This, I believe, will ſeem a Paradox to you at firſt; but I am very confident you will be of my mind when you have conſider'd, that the only, or at leaſt the principal Thing which that ſort of Men ſupport themſelves by, is, the Gift of the Tongue, a peculiar Knack of Talking religiouſly:

For

For if you look into their Lives and Temper, they have no Advantage of other Men; and if you examine either their Principles, or their Abilities, theſe will not mend the matter; and yet they have ſtrange Authority and Influence in the World; they charm Men into Security of their Honeſty by their Talk; they caſt a Miſt before Mens Eyes that they are taken for godly Men, let their Pride and Paſſion, their Covetouſneſs and Ambition be otherwiſe as palpable and notorious as they can. This Talent of Talking is ſo valuable, it redeems them from Suſpicion; with this Paſs-port they go undetected; they are Saints from the Teeth outwards, and Fools admire them; and ſo they compaſs their Ends.

Now, were all ſincerely good Men ſo ſenſible of this as they ought to be, and would they in earneſt apply themſelves to grave, and ſerious, and pious Diſcourſe in the habit of their Converſations, theſe Jack-Daws would be deprived of their borrowed Feathers, and thoſe crafty Men would not have a Mask or Vizard left them to cheat the World withal.

You will ſay, perhaps, they would out-ſhoot thoſe good Men in their own Bow, and talk at an higher rate in Hypocriſy, than the other could do in Sincerity. But for Anſwer: Do but conſider whether there be not a greater Power in Life, than in mere Shew and Pageantry; whether that which proceeds from [illegible] Thoughts, and Heart, and Principles within, be not likely to have more Vigour and Spirit, than that which hath no Root, no Foundation; but is begotten, and lives, and dies between the Tongue and Teeth? Do not you obſerve, that nothing ſo much diſparages a Picture as the Preſence of him for whom it was drawn? Life hath a thouſand Vigours and Beauties, which no Hand of the Painter can reach

and

and diſplay. So hath ſpiritual Life, when it puts forth itſelf; a Spirit, a Warmth, an Air, or whatſoever you will call it, which cannot be ſo imitated, but it will ſhame and detect the Rival. The great Miſchief of the World therefore, and the only Security of Hypocriſy, is, that the Truth and Life diſappears, and gives its Counterfeit the Stage entirely, to act upon; but let that appear, and confront its Adverſary, and Hypocriſy will be ſenſible of an unequal Match, and bluſh, or withdraw itſelf. When, I ſay, Men that feel the Power of Religion in their own Souls will be perſuaded to expreſs themſelves habitually, manly and judiciouſly, they will baffle and confound all Theatrical Pretenders to Religion. And now, *Phil.* what is become of that formidable Objection, as you and I thought at firſt? May not we now adventure to talk of Religion, without the danger of Phanaticiſm?

Phil. Yes, I ſee clearly we may; and not only ſo, but you have now convinced me, that for that very Reaſon we ought to do it, as the beſt way to ſupplant Phanaticiſm. But at the worſt, if there were ſome danger that I ſhould incurr the raſh Cenſure of ſome that I value, and were likely to be call'd Phanatick for my pains, I would not ſtick to ſerve ſo many great and excellent Ends at that hazard, if I could.

Sebaſt. Bravely reſolv'd, my good Friend! Now you ſpeak like a Man, and a Chriſtian: There's the very Point of Virtue. He that is too tender and delicate, hath not the Courage to be good; and he that will venture nothing here, will win nothing in the other World. You know my Senſe already, that Good-nature is an excellent and uſeful Companion of Virtue; but, as the Caſe may happen, a little Moroſity is neceſſary to preſerve them both. But, I pray you, why did you put

an

an *if* at the laſt? After all, do you queſtion whether it be poſſible to diſcourſe piouſly?

Phil. No, good *Sebaſtian*, that is not it; for you have convinced me of the Feaſibleneſs, as well as the Excellency of that kind of Converſation: But you know (as I have ſaid before) that is out of the Road of Diſcourſe; and beſides the difficulty of bringing thoſe one converſes with to it, it is natural for a Man to follow his own Biaſs. If I were once enter'd into ſuch a Communication, I am ſure I ſhould embrace it, and I think I could continue it. But there is a ſheepiſh kind of Modeſty in this, (as well as in other things) that checks and reſtrains a Man from beginning that which neither he, nor his Companions have been uſed to. If therefore you can help me to conquer my ſelf, as well as to anſwer Objections; to overcome my Temper, as well as to ſubmit my Judgment: I would then ſet about it as well as I could.

Sebaſt. With all my Heart; only with this Condition, as well as I can (as you ſay.) But I pray give me leave to ask you a Queſtion by the bye, and not decline that which you have put to me: The Caſe is this; it is commonly obſerved that good Men find ſuch a Modeſty (as you ſpeak of) to reſtrain them, when they are ſetting themſelves to begin ſome good Diſcourſe; inſomuch that ſometimes, with very great difficulty (if at all) they can ſcrew themſelves up to it: But contrariwiſe, lewd and prophane Men rant and hector at an intolerable rate; they will blaſpheme and burleſque Religion when they are in their Humour, without Regard to God and Man. Now ſeeing the former have all the Reaſon in the World on their ſide, and the other as much againſt them, what is it that makes this difference in their Spirit and Temper?

Phil.

Phil. That I may come the ſooner at the Solution of my own Difficulty, I will anſwer your Queſtion as briefly as I can; and I think it may be reſolved into theſe ſeveral Cauſes: Firſt, prophane Men are generally very groſſly ignorant; for I cannot imagine that any thing elſe ſhould make them bold with God Almighty. And tho' they pretend to Wit, yet a Man to their own Tooth hath told us, that a certain Doſe of that thing called Wit, is a neceſſary Ingredient into the Compoſition of a very ridiculous Fool. And I have heard that it hath been ſaid by a better Man than he, that a Smattering in Knowledge (which is the Meaſure of a Wit) diſpoſes Men to Atheiſm; whereas a full Proportion would carry them through, to the Senſe of God and Religion. The ſecond Cauſe I aſſign is, that theſe Men having abandoned Virtue, they have therewith loſt all good Nature and civil Reſpect; and are delivered up to Inſolence and an affronting Humour. And thirdly, I make no great doubt, but the Devil, whoſe Work they do, aſſiſts them in it. And now you will eaſily think there needs no other Concurrence; yet I will add another, and that is Drunkenneſs: For methinks it ſhould be out of the Power of the Devil himſelf to tempt a ſober Man to ſuch a Villainy; but in the Rage of Drink God is defied, and every thing that is ſacred. But now to my Queſtion.

What makes prophane Men ſo bold in their Aſſaults upon Religion.

Sebaſt. Firſt, *Phil.* let me kiſs your Hands for your ingenious Anſwer to my Query; and then, in the ſecond Place, I wiſh I could anſwer yours as well. The plain truth is, (as I have acknowledged to you before) I have been in that Oven, and therefore cannot wonder to find another Man there; and though I cannot always conquer my Baſhfulneſs, yet in ſuch Caſes I always endeavour it,

it, and I will tell you by what methods; and ſo I hope the ſame Remedies may relieve us both.

Firſt then, when I enter into Company, with Deſign to engage them in good Diſcourſe; I endeavour, if it be poſſible, to make ſome Friend privy to my Plot, who, perhaps ſhall ſit at ſome diſtance from me; but underſtanding his cue, ſhall be always ready to ſecond me in what I undertake; and ſo, by an honeſt Confederacy, we can carry on the Buſineſs. And this I do eſpecially, if I apprehend the Company to conſiſt either of prophane Perſons, or captious Wits. For if a modeſt Man ſhould, in ſuch a Caſe, begin an unuſual Diſcourſe, and have no body to follow him, he will not only miſcarry of his Purpoſe, but be aſhamed and confounded. But if he have one prepared to comply with him, they ſhall both have Time to recollect themſelves, and to carry the Ball of Diſcourſe whither they pleaſe.

In the next place, when I am deſtitute of the Aſſiſtance of ſuch an Aſſociate to ſecond and relieve me, then, if I apprehend I have an Opportunity of diſcourſing uſefully, I reſolve to begin, whatever comes of it; that is, I forcibly break Silence, though it be with Trembling, and Paleneſs, and Faultering, and without any well contrived Expreſſions; and when once the Ice is broken, the worſt is paſt: Then preſently my Colour, and Speech, and Spirits will return again. For to proceed is very eaſy then, becauſe, as I have noted before, the Objects of Religion lie ſo ready to a Man's Thoughts, that he cannot be at a Loſs in the Sequel of his Diſcourſe.

Means to raiſe our Spirits to a fit Temper for religious Communication.

In order hereto, I endeavour to raiſe in my own Heart a great Zeal of God's Glory, and a generous Deſign

Design of doing good to those I converse with: And therefore I think with my self, I am not only to stand upon my Guard, and secure my self from Infection; nor much less to be a mere Negative, and content my self to do no hurt to my Acquaintance; but that it is expected from me I should benefit them, and season their Intercourse with something virtuous and graceful.

Moreover, I endeavour in the whole Conduct of my self, and the Habit of my Life, to arrive at a Seriousness of Spirit, and a Deepness of Thought, without which, neither shall I be in Temper to begin or carry on any such weighty Discourse with others, nor will they expect it from me: A light, trifling, jesting, Spirit is good for nothing but Sport and May-game. Such as can ordinarily find in their Hearts to step aside to a Quibble, or a Clinch, are generally Men so unfit for Religion, that they are seldom useful to themselves in any secular Business: But a serious Man hath his Thoughts about him, and his very Mien and Countenance raises the Expectation of the Company, and so they are half prepared to receive his Impressions. Now, to bring my self to this Temper, I often represent to my self God's Omnipresence; and that I am before a mighty, wise, and most reverend Majesty, who takes Notice of all my Carriage and Demeanor. I think frequently of the Judgment to come, and the wonderful Accuracy and Solemnity of it; of the unspeakable Concerns of Hell and Heaven, and the whole Affair of another World. By these Considerations I curb the Levity and Wantonness of my Spirit, and so become both furnished with fit Thoughts to communicate, and also with a proper Temper to communicate them.

Besides this, I make it my earnest Endeavour to be as much above the World as I can; I mean, to have

have as indifferent an Eſteem of Riches and Fame, *&c.* as is poſſible, that my Heart may not eagerly and intently run upon them; for I find by woful Experience, that whenſoever it warps that way, I am ſure to be liſtleſs and formal in any ſuch Enterprize as we are ſpeaking of: But whenſoever I can contemn them, then I am, as it were all Spirit, and have ſo lively Impreſſes of another World upon me, that I can almoſt make it viſible to my Companions.

Amongſt all theſe, I pray daily and earneſtly for God's Grace and Aſſiſtance, that he will every where be preſent to me by his Holy Spirit, and put uſeful Thoughts into my Heart, and give me Courage to expreſs them ſo, as to beget the like in others.

This, Sir, is the Method I take with my ſelf; and having, I thank God, often ſucceeded well with it, againſt a cowardly Heart of my own, I cannot but expect it will have greater and more ſignal Effects upon you.

Phil. God verifie the Omen. However, I thank you moſt heartily for the Receipt, which I will keep as long as I live.

Sebaſt. But I pray, good *Phil.* do not make it publick; for though I envy no Body the Benefit of my Experience, yet I would be loth the World ſhould know what a ſhameful Diſeaſe I have been ſick of.

Phil. O Sir, Timidity is but a natural Infirmity, and hath not much Shame attending it: But I muſt tell you as my Confeſſor or Phyſician, which you will, of another Diſeaſe I labour under, ſo ſhameful and ſcandalous, that ſcarce any body will own it; and that is Ignorance: If I had Courage enough for the Buſineſs, (we have all this while been ſpeaking of) yet I am afraid by my Unskilfulneſs

ulneſs I ſhall ſpoil all: Let me therefore pray ou to afford me your Advice in this Caſe alſo.

Sebaſt. Fear it not, *Phil.* A Man of your cheerul Countenance, ſprightly Vigour, and Benigniy of Temper, can never labour under any ſuch Diſeaſe.

Phil. Good *Sebaſtian* be not too ſecure of me; or this is a Buſineſs of that nature, that unleſs it e done gracefully, it had better be let alone; and ſpecially becauſe the Enterprize is ſomewhat new nd unuſual; therefore the greater Dexterity and Management is required, to give it a good Appeaance at its ſetting out, and ſo to lay a Foundaion for its coming into common Uſe and Reputaion. And beſides, it concerns you in point of our own Credit, to furniſh me out well; for ſeeng it is you only that have put me upon it, the Diſhonour will redound to you if I miſcarry in the Undertaking.

Sebaſt. In earneſt, Sir, and without a Compleent, you are known to be a Man of ſo good Parts, hat you can never want Materials; and then, our Sweetneſs of Addreſs will not fail to give reat Advantage and Acceptation to your Diſcours. Now it is an hard thing, that becauſe you are leaſed to think me wiſe, therefore I muſt ſhew y ſelf to be a Fool; but that's a ſmall matter etween Friends: Therefore, ſince you will have ſo, I will tell you the Effect of my Obſervaon in this matter.

And the firſt thing to our purpoſe which I reark, is, the Example of our Saviour, (and who an we better learn of?) And he, obſerve, had a Dexterity of pplying every accidental Ocurrence to his holy purpoſes, it were by a kind of Chymiſtry ſeparating the roſs Matter and ſubliming ordinary Affairs to hea-

Prudential Advices about religious Conference.

venly Doctrine: Inſomuch, that there was ſcarce-ly any common Affair of Life, ſuch as Eating or Drinking, or Recreation, no Diſeaſe or Infirmity of the Body, no Trade and Occupation, ſuch as Merchandiſe or Husbandry, no Building or Plant-ing, Plowing or Sowing; nay not ſo mean Em-ployments as Women's leavening their Bread, grinding at the Mill, or ſweeping an Houſe, but he ſpiritualized them, and apply'd them to his Deſigns.

Now if we would learn of him, and endeavour to imitate this Dexterity, we might with great Eaſe, and without all Violence; ſurpriſe Men into Religion; and not only at every turn introduce pious Diſcourſe, but render the Subject of it intel-ligible to the meaneſt Capacities; and withal by thoſe ſenſible Reſemblances give ſuch lively Tou-ches upon the Minds of Men, as that what we de-livered upon thoſe Occaſions would ſtick and re-main with them.

And there is no great Pains or Skill required for the doing of this; the principal requiſite to it is a Zeal of God's Glory, and ſuch a conſtant and fixed Eye upon it as ſhall make us apprehenſive of the Opportunities that preſent themſelves, and then a little Humility to condeſcend to the Weak-neſs of People: Which two things pre-ſuppoſed a very ſmall Exerciſe of Fancy would draw the Pa-rallels, and make the Application; as any Man will quickly find, that will ſet himſelf about it.

As for inſtance, when we viſit a ſick Friend or Neighbour, what a fair Opportunity have we to diſcourſe of the Immortality of the Soul? And what an eaſie Tranſition is it from a Phyſician to a Saviour? Or why may we not as well cheer up our afflicted Friend with the Comforts of Religion as well as amuſe or divert him with impertinent Stories? Or ſuppoſe Friends be together, and diſ-

poſe

poſed to be merry, why may not ſome Word come in ſeaſonably of the everlaſting Friendſhips in Heaven, or of the continual Feaſt of a good Conſcience? Why may not the common Chat about News be elevated to the Conſideration of the good Tidings of the Goſpel? What hinders but our Diſhes of Meat may be ſeaſoned with a gracious Word or two about the Food of our Souls? When Men are talking of old Age, it would be no great Strain if thence our Thoughts riſe up to eternal Life. Nor any great Flight of Fancy is requiſite to improve all the Accidents of our Lives to the Contemplation of divine Providence, which orders and governs them. In a Word, every thing is capable of Improvement, if we be not wanting; we ſhall never want Opportunity, if we embrace it; any thing will ſerve an intent Mind, and a devout Heart, to theſe Purpoſes.

My ſecond Remark is, upon the Cuſtom of thoſe ſeveral Perſons in the Goſpel, that upon diverſ Occaſions enter'd into Conference with our Saviour, which I note they always began by way of queſtion, or doubt; as Men deſirous to be informed, rather than affecting to teach or dictate. This was not only the way of *Nicodemus*, *John* iii. of the Woman of *Samaria*, *John* iv. and of the young rich Man, *Matth.* xix. who came in earneſt to be inſtructed; but of the Scribes and Phariſees, and Sadducees, who came to diſpute. And, indeed, I have heard, this modeſt way of propounding a Queſtion, and expecting and replying to the Anſwer, was the old way of Diſputation. And certainly this is of great uſe in our Caſe, for the more eaſy and acceptable Introduction of the ſerious Matters of Religion into ordinary Converſation. When we do not violently break in upon the Company, but civilly make our way; nor abruptly obtrude our Sentiments, but inſinuate them;

not malapertly reprove other Men's Errors, or ſuperciliouſly dictate our own Opinions; not fall upon preaching, or throw down our Gauntlet and challenge the Company to a Combat; but modeſtly appear in the Garb of Learners, and propound a Caſe as to Men wiſer than our ſelves, for our own Satisfaction. This Courſe, inſtead of offending, exceedingly obliges thoſe we apply ourſelves to; foraſmuch as every Man is glad to be accounted wiſe, and fit to be conſulted with.

As, ſuppoſe you ſhould ask the Perſons you are with, what they think of ſuch or ſuch an Argument for the Immortality of the Soul, or for the Proof of a particular Providence; or ask their Advice how to anſwer ſuch an Objection that comes in your Way againſt either of thoſe, or any other fundamental Point of Religion: And though ſuch Queſtions may at firſt ſeem merely ſpeculative, yet, if they be purſued wiſely, and with that Intention they will infallibly lead to Practice.

Or, ſuppoſe you put a Caſe about Temperance, as, namely, what are the Rules and Meaſures of Sobriety, ſo as alſo to avoid Scrupuloſity? How far is worldly Care evil and vicious, and how far innocent and allowable? What is the Predicament of Careleſſneſs and common Swearing, and what kind of Sins it is reducible to?

Or more generally, How a Man may diſcern his own Proficiency in Virtue; and what Preparation of a Man's ſelf is flatly neceſſary againſt the Uncertainty of Life, and to ſecure the great Stake of an Intereſt in another World.

Or, to name no more, What the Company thinks of ſuch or ſuch a Paſſage in a Sermon you lately heard, or in ſuch a Book? Theſe, and a thouſand more ſuch eaſy In-lets there are into good Diſcourſe, without Imputation of Pragmatical-

neſs

ſs, and with a little Preſence of Mind will improve to what Purpoſes we deſire.

Another thing that I have obſerved in order to his Affair is, what I have learned from the Custom of prudent Men; to inſinuate that by a Story, which would not be ſo well received if it were directly and bluntly delivered. Telling of Stories, you know, is a common Theme of Converſation; and, if a Man have any graceful way of telling them, and eſpecially uſe any Prudence in the Choice of them, he hath the Company in his power, and may lead them to what Diſcourſe he will. And beſides, Men will admit of that to be ſaid in the third Perſon, which they will not bear in the ſecond.

Now, to this purpoſe, ſuppoſe a Man ſhould have in Readineſs a Story of ſome remarkable Judgment of God upon ſome notorious Sin, that he would by no means deter thoſe he converſes with from, no body could take Offence at the Story, and yet every Man's Conſcience would make Application of it. Or ſuppoſe a Man ſhould, in lively Colours, deſcribe ſome excellent Perſon, he would not only put all the Hearers into the Thoughts of thoſe Virtues that were ſo deſcribed, but ſtir up jointly a modeſt Shame in them for their own Shortneſs, and an Emulation of ſo brave an Example. But, to be ſure, he ſhall hereby give himſelf an Introduction (without Affectation) of diſcourſing of which ſoever of thoſe eminent Virtues he pleaſes. Theſe, and many ſuch other ways there are which your own Prudence and Obſervation will repreſent to you better than I can; by which a diſcreet Perſon may engage any Company (in which it is fit for an honeſt Man to be found) in good Diſcourſe.

But I will not omit, upon this Occaſion, to tell you a Story, which I have from very good Hands, of two very eminent Men, both for Learning and Piety, in the laſt age, (or rather the beginning of the preſent;) the one of them a great Prelate, (indeed, a Primate) and the other a Churchman of great note and preferment. Theſe two great Men, as they often met together to conſult the Intereſt of Learning, and the Affairs of the Church; ſo when they had diſpatch'd that, they ſeldom parted from one another without ſuch an Encounter as this: "Come, good Doctor, *(ſaith* "*the Biſhop)* let us now talk a little of *Jeſus Chriſt.*" Or, on the other ſide, ſaid the Doctor, "Come, "my Lord, let me hear your Grace ſpeak of the "Goodneſs of God, with your wonted Piety and "Eloquence: Let us warm one another's Hearts "with Heaven, that we may the better bear this "cold World. I cannot tell you the Words that paſſed between them, nor can you expect it from me; but I am ſufficiently aſſured of the Matter of Fact. And this they perform'd with that holy Reverence, and ardent Zeal, with that delightful Senſe and Feeling, that afforded Matter of Admiration to thoſe of their Friends or Servants that happen'd to be preſent, or to over-hear them. Here is now an Example of holy Conference, without a Preface, and yet without Exception: A Precedent, not only juſtifying all I have ſaid, but eaſie to imitate where-ever there is a like Spirit of Piety. A few ſuch Men would put Prophaneneſs out of Countenance, and turn the Tide of Converſation.

Phil. Shall I crave of you to tell me the Names of thoſe two Perſons?

Sebaſt. Their Names are ſo well known, that I think you might ſpare the Queſtion: But they were *U*—— and *P*——.

Phil.

Phil. I gueſs who you mean, and I would to God there were more of them. I doubt I ſhall never be able to imitate; but I am reſolved to write after ſo fair a Copy as well as I can: Therefore I pray you, if you have any farther Directions for the guiding of my Hand, let me have them.

Sebaſt. I ſee you are in earneſt; God's Bleſſing on your Heart for it. All that I have to ſay, or (as I think) can be ſaid more, may be ſummed up in theſe four following Cautions.

Firſt, You muſt remember that (which was ſaid before) you are not always to be endeavouring a Diſcourſe of Religion; other Diſcourſe, ſo it be manly and pertinent, is not only lawful, but neceſſary in its Seaſon. The wiſe Man tells us, there is a Time for all things: To over-do, is to do nothing to the purpoſe; and to exclude all other innocent and ingenious converſe, for the ſake of Religion, is to make Religion irkſome, and the certain way to ſhut it quite out of the World.

Secondly, Becauſe religious Conference is not always a Duty, therefore it is a peculiar Seaſon and Opportunity that makes it at any time become ſo; and conſequently, that is to be watched, and laid hold upon. My meaning is, That when Men are in Drink, or in Paſſion, it is no fit time to enter on this Subject, for it will be but to caſt Pearls before Swine; it can do thoſe Perſons no good at ſuch times, and it may do us hurt, and Religion too. But when Men are in the calmeſt and ſobereſt Moods, then is the only Time for this Intercourſe.

Thirdly, It is very adviſeable that we make a Diſtinction of Perſons, as well as Times, for this Buſineſs. You know the World is not all of a Size; ſome are our Superiors, others are our Inferiors, or Equals; there are ſome very acute and

learned Men, ſome dull and ignorant; ſome are captious, others ſincere and plain-hearted; ſome prophane, and others pious: In a Word, there are Old and Young, Rich and Poor, Cheerful and Melancholy, and abundance other ſuch Differences in Men's Circumſtances: All which require a peculiar Addreſs, if we intend to faſten any good thing on them. But of this I need ſay no more, knowing to whom I ſpeak.

Again, *Fourthly*, It is a Matter of Prudence, that our Eſſays of this kind be rather perfective, than deſtructive; that is, that we do not take upon us, authoritatively to quaſh and controul other Diſcourſe; but rather take Advantage of any occaſional Paſſages and Hints, from whence to improve and raiſe it inſenſibly to that we would be at.

Laſtly, That out of Indulgence to the Levity, and in compliance with the curioſity of Men's Minds, we ſhould not always harp upon one String; but ſometimes deſignedly lay aſide our Buſineſs, and then reſume it again; as in Muſick, to ſing and let fall a Note, and by and by get it up again; that by ſuch variety we may afford the more delightful Entertainment to thoſe that are our Companions. And now, I doubt, I have quite tired you; therefore it is time to bid you a Good-Night.

Phil. Dear *Sebaſtian*, ſhall I tell you a plain Truth? When we firſt came together this Evening, your Converſation methought was ſo much out of the Mode, that though I conſider'd you as an honeſt Gentleman, yet I ſuſpected I ſhould have uneaſie Company with you: But now I fanſie you are like ſome of thoſe old ſtately Buildings I have ſeen which are a little rough and weather-beaten without; but for all that, are ſubſtantially ſtrong, and expreſs very admirable Art within: Or, as I have

have heard it was ſaid of *Socrates*, that he was like Apothecaries Boxes, that had the Picture of an Ape, a Satyr, or perhaps a Serpent, without ſide; but contain'd excellent Medicaments. So you, that I feared would be my Diſeaſe, have been my Phyſician; and, which is more, have ſet me up for one too.

Sebaſt. Nay, then Good-Night again, if you be for Complements: But if you have any real value for me, I hope you will now do me the favour of your Company at my Houſe ſome other Evening.

Phil. Never doubt it, Sir; your dead Men ſhall ſcarcely haunt you more than I will do. But Good-Night heartily.

The End of the Firſt Conference.

A

WINTER-EVENING CONFERENCE.

PART II.

Prov. xxvii. 17.

As Iron ſharpeneth Iron, ſo doth the Countenance of a Man his Friend.

1 Cor. xv. 33.

Evil Communications corrupt good Manners.

A

WINTER-EVENING CONFERENCE AT *Sebaſtian's* Houſe.

PART II.

The ARGUMENT of the ſecond CONFERENCE.

In the former Conference, Sebaſtian *having convinced* Philander *of the great Importance of Religion, and the Wiſdom of making it as well the Subject of ſocial Communication as of retired Meditation: Accordingly they two meet on purpoſe this ſecond time to confer about it. But* Biophilus, *a ſceptical Perſon, being in their Company, he at firſt diverts them from their Deſign by other Diſcourſe; till after a while, under the Diſguiſe of News, he is wheedled into this Subject before he was aware: And then he puts them upon the Proof of thoſe Principles which they would have ſuppoſed. Upon this Occaſion the Foundations of Religion*

ligion are ſearched into; and particularly, that great Point concerning a Judgment to come, *is ſubſtantially proved. Which being done, and* Biophilus *thereby rendred ſomewhat more inclinable to be ſerious, they then purſue their firſt Intentions, and diſcourſe warmly and ſenſibly of another World, and of the neceſſary Preparations for it, ſo long, 'till they not only inflame their own Hearts with Devotion, but ſtrike ſome Sparks of it into* Biophilus *alſo.*

Philander. YOU ſee, *Sebaſtian*, I am as good as my Promiſe; and at this time ſo much better, as I have brought my Neighbour *Biophilus* along with me.

Sebaſt. I always took you for a Man of your Word; but now you have not only acquitted your ſelf, but oblig'd me.

Biophilus. Your humble Servant, good *Sebaſtian:* I know you are a ſtudious Perſon; yet I thought Company would not be unacceptable to you at this Seaſon.

Sebaſt. You are heartily welcome, Sir: I love my Books well, but my Friends better. Come, Gentlemen, will it pleaſe you to draw near the Fire? The Weather is very ſharp ſtill.

Phil. The Cold continues; but, thanks be to God, the Evenings are not ſo tedious ſince I ſaw you laſt.

Bioph. How can that be, *Philander?* The Weather, indeed, may change on a ſudden, and become colder, or warmer, upon ſeveral Accidents; but ſeeing the Sun keeps his conſtant Courſe, the *Interim* of a few Days can make no diſcernible Difference in the length or ſhortneſs of the Evenings.

Phil.

Phil. But here is a Friend hath taught me an Art for that; a way to make Time longer or ſhorter, at pleaſure; nay, (which perhaps will increaſe your *Wonder*) both theſe ſeeming Contraries ſhall be co-incident. A Man ſhall have more Time to ſpend, and leſs to ſpare; more for his Uſe and Pleaſure, and none to be a Burthen to him.

Of Improvement of Time.

Bioph. Can Art do that? That is a noble Skill indeed, (if it be poſſible;) to ſhorten a Man's Time, and yet prolong his Life. Sure you ſpeak Riddles: However, I pray, make me partaker of the Myſtery.

Phil. Good Neighbour, there is no other Secret in it but this: Good Company and profitable Converſation redeem Time from Folly and Impertinency; and ſo we really live longer, and they alſo ſpend the Time very pleaſantly; and ſo our Lives ſeem to be ſhorter.

Bioph. That's pretty, I confeſs; but I had rather it had been literally true.

Sebaſt. I believe *Biophilus* remembers a Proverbial Saying they have in *Italy* to this Purpoſe, *He that would have a ſhort* Lent, *let him borrow Money to be re-paid at* Eaſter. So he that forecaſts the Account which every Man muſt one Day make, how he hath expended the Time of this Life, will not be apt to think the Term of it to be over-long. And he on the other ſide, who improves his Time as he ought, and hath his Accounts in readineſs, will not think the Day of Reckoning too ſoon, or ſudden.

Bioph. Very good again: But, nevertheleſs, with your Pardon, Gentlemen, I ſhould argue the quite contrary from your Premiſes. For, if there be a Judgment to come, (as you are pleaſed to ſuppoſe) and that a Man muſt render an Account

A Touch of Epicurean Doctrine.

Account of all his Actions another Day: This, methinks, ſhould curdle all his Delights; and the very thoughts of ſuch a Thing filling him with perpetual Fears and Solicitude about it, muſt needs make Life very tedious to him. But if there be no ſuch Thing to be feared hereafter, then Life will ſeem ſhort, becauſe it will be ſweet and comfortable: And then alſo a Man ſhall, in effect, live a great while in a little time, when there is nothing to diſturb his Thoughts, to impeach his Pleaſures, or interrupt the Enjoyment of himſelf.

Phil. Yes, even in the Caſe which you put, Death will be ſure to come ſhortly, and that will ſpoil his Sport.

Bioph. That is very true, and very ſad: If therefore you could find out a Remedy for that you would do ſomething to purpoſe. But when as you cannot but obſerve that there are ſeveral ſorts of Brute Creatures that out-live Mankind, (I mean, tho' they know not what it is to live, yet) they continue longer in the World, and have as well a quicker Senſe of Pleaſure, as a more unlimited and *uncontrouled Enjoyment* of it; in both which Reſpects we have too great Cauſe to envy their Happineſs. If Mankind, after all this, muſt be perpetually tormented too with Suſpicions of what may come after, they are doubly miſerable, and under the hardeſt Fate of all Creatures.

Sebaſt. That very Thing which you now obſerve, is to me a very great Argument of what you oppoſe. For upon thoſe very Conſiderations, *viz.* that the Life of Man in this World is ſhorter than that of ſome other leſs conſiderable Creatures, and that the pleaſure thereof is interrupted alſo by the Expectation of the future; upon thoſe very Grounds (ſay I) there is great Reaſon to believe that there is ſuch a thing as another World, wherein he may have amends made him for whatever

ever was amiſs, or defective here. For it is not credible with me, that ſuch Power and Wiſdom as is plainly diſplayed in the Conſtitution of Man, ſhould be ſo utterly deſtitute of Goodneſs, as to contrive things ſo ill, that the nobleſt Being ſhould be finally the moſt unfortunate.

To which I muſt add, that therefore the Apprehenſion of ſuch a Judgment to come as we ſpeak of, neither is, nor can be mere Matter of Dread and Horrour, (as you ſeem to ſuppoſe;) but is either terrible or comfortable, reſpectively to Men's Preparations for it. I cannot wonder if the Thoughts of it do ſo fright and diſcompoſe evil Men, ſo that they could with all their Hearts wiſh there was no ſuch thing. But, moſt certainly, to wiſe and virtuous Men, it is ſo far from being formidable, that contrariwiſe the Hope of it is the very Joy of their Hearts, the Support of their Spirits, their greateſt Security againſt all the croſs Accidents of this World, and in a Word, their Port and Sanctuary.

Of the different Proſpects different Men have of the other World.

Bioph. Theſe are fine Sayings, *Sebaſtian*; but when you have ſaid all you can, and made the beſt of the Caſe, when it comes to the Proof, I do not find Men in love with dying, nor to have ſo comfortable an Opinion of that other World you ſpeak of; but that they could, with all their Hearts, be content to quit their Intereſt in the latter, ſo they might put off the former. I remember once when I was preſent at an Execution, amongſt the reſt of the condemned Malefactors, there was one, who either was ſo ſecure of his own Innocency, or ſo confident of the Sufficiency of his Preparations for Death, or, which I rather ſuſpect, ſo elevated and tranſported with the Harangues of the Prieſt, that he ſeemed to long for his near ap-

proaching End, and pretended he would not ex
change his Condition for that of any of the Spec
tators there preſent: But by and by comes the ſur
prizing News of a Pardon or Reprieve, and th
poor Man was ready to leap out of his Skin fo
Joy.

And I have often obſerved Men, who when the
have been deſperately ſick, and paſt all hopes
Life, then (as it is uſual with Men in danger
drowning to catch hold of any thing that offers
ſelf for their Support) to ſet a good Face on th
matter, and (as we ſay) make a Virtue of Neceſſ
ty, and welcome the Approach of Death wit
ſeeming Courage and Conſtancy: But in this Junc
ture, let but a Phyſician appear that gives them
ny hopes of Recovery, they preſently ſtart bac
from the Brink of another World, as from an ho
rible Precipice, and ſmile upon the Meſſenger th
brings the good Tidings of Life. I cannot ſ
therefore that Men do indeed believe themſelves
this matter.

Sebaſt. There is no doubt, *Biophilus*, but th
(as you ſay) ſome Men may talk only, and ſet
good Face upon that which they have no comfort
able Senſe of: And no wonder if ſuch Men's Cou
rage fails them when they have moſt uſe of it
for it is not imaginable that it ſhould be eaſy t
brazen it out againſt Death. But this is no mo
Reproach to true Faith in God, and Hopes of
nother World, than it is to generous Courage an
Valour, that now and then you ſhall ſee an huffing
ſwaggering Hector turn Recreant when he is pu
to it in earneſt. It is acknowledged to be ver
eaſy to brag and vapour when no Danger is near
but it requires real Bravery to ſtand to it when
Man is briskly encounter'd. Now as you will no
ſay there is no ſuch thing as Valour, becauſe the
are ſome Cowards that pretend to it; ſo neither

reſume) will you think fit to ſuppoſe there is no Faith, becauſe there is ſome Hypocriſy.

Beſides, if you were as well ſatisfied as I am, or pretend to be, of the Truth of that we are diſcourſing upon, namely of another World; yet our Experience of the common Courſe of Men's Lives would force you to acknowledge, that even amongſt thoſe that do profeſs to believe ſuch a thing, there are but very few who appear to be habitually well prepared for ſo great a Trial; and therefore no wonder if ſuch Perſons be ſomewhat ſtarted and diſcompoſed at an immediate Summons, and could be very glad to have a farther Day given them to make up ſo great an Account. For however a tolerable Courſe of Living may make a ſhift to ſupport a Man's Hopes, whilſt Death is looked upon at a diſtance; yet when he comes to the Point, that a Man muſt die indeed, it is very reaſonable to expect, that ſuch Men we now ſpeak of, ſhould be not a little ſollicitous in ſuch a Concern, where they know the Miſcarriage is fatal and the beſt Proviſion poſſible will be little enough.

But notwithſtanding all this, there are certainly, and have been, ſundry Perſons in the World, who though they have had the ſame natural Affection to themſelves, and to the preſent Life with others, yet have as heartily wiſhed and longed for the great Day as it was lawful for them to do. They know it is their Duty to maintain the Station God hath ſet them in, till they have a fair Diſmiſſion; but baiting that Conſideration, I doubt not but many a good Man would ſue out his *Quietus eſt*, and gladly embrace an Opportunity of bidding Farewel to the World.

Bioph. You ſay well: But how ſhall this Caſe be decided? Where may a Man find any ſuch Perſon as you ſpeak of?

Sebaſt. Perhaps you have not heard any Man ſing his *Nunc dimittis*; or if you had, it may be you would not have believed him to be in earneſt: But what think you of St. *Paul*, who profeſſes, *he deſires to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt?* And particularly, 2 *Tim.* iv. 7. he foreſees a violent Death approaching him, and upon that Occaſion, he, by way of Contemplation, places himſelf as it were, upon a Promontory, where he could look backward and forward, and take a view of both Worlds; and when he reflects upon that which he was leaving, he finds that he had diſcharged his Part well and worthily whilſt he was in it. *I have fought the good Fight*, (ſaith he) *I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith.* But then when he looks forward, and takes a Proſpect of what was to come, here he triumphs and exults with Joy; *Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which God the righteous Judge ſhall give me:* As if he had ſaid, "I know no Cauſe "that I ſhould either be aſhamed to live, or a"fraid to die: I have no Reaſon to be very fond "of Life, who have met with ſo many Afflicti"ons in it; yet I that have born them ſo undaunt"edly hitherto, can have as little Reaſon to leave "the World now in a Pet of Impatience: But "upon the whole matter, I ſee great Advantage "on the other ſide; and the other World is a "much better than the preſent, as Harveſt is than "Labour, as Victory than Battle; and as being "at Home, than in Travel and on a Journey.

Heroes that can deſpiſe Death.

Or what do you think of ſo many thouſand Martyrs, who have not only gone out of the World with Smiles in their Faces, and Songs in their Mouths, but have choſen Death when they might have lived as freely, as happily, and as long as other Men? They were not worn out with

Age, nor vexed and wearied with Poverty, nor diſtracted by any Diſaſter; they had as tender and ſenſible Conſtitutions as other Men, as much natural Affection to themſelves, and as ſound Reaſon to judge what was beſt; and yet deſpiſed the preſent Life and World, in compariſon of that to come.

Bioph. Nay, as for thoſe Men of old, which you ſpeak of, I cannot tell what to make of them: But I would fain ſee ſuch a Man now.

Sebaſt. I make no Queſtion but I could direct you to ſuch Men now; but it may be you will not believe they deſpiſe Death, becauſe you ſee them yet living: However, what think you of the Man that hath the Bravery to deny himſelf thoſe Profits and Pleaſures which other Men allow themſelves, ſo long as they ſee no Infamy or external Danger attend them? What think you of the Man that dares to be virtuous in a lewd Age, and in evil Company; and hath the Courage and Proweſs to confront a whole World with his Example? What think you of the Man that ſits ſo looſe to the World, that he can bear Proſperity without being ſupercilious, and Adverſity without being dejected; that can be in want without repining, and can be liberal without upbraiding? Or, to ſay no more, what think you of the Man that ſcorns to crouch and ſneak, and paraſitically to humour and flatter others for his ſecular Intereſt or Security? Such Men as theſe are to be found in the preſent Age: And wherever you find any ſuch Man, aſſure your ſelf, there is a Perſon that believes himſelf, or rather, that believes in God; and hath as real a Perſuaſion of the World to come, as other Men have of that which they ſee with their Eyes, and touch with their Fingers.

Bioph. I believe there are ſome ſuch Men as you ſpeak of; and I do account them brave and wor-

thy Perſons: But theſe Inſtances come not up to the Point; foraſmuch as ſome of theſe will quail at the Approach of Death, as well as other Men.

Sebaſt. It may happen ſo that a virtuous Man may be a little diſcompoſed at the rude Aſſaults of Death, and yet without any Blemiſh either to his Faith or Virtue: For, in the firſt Place you know all Men have a natural Love of Life, and an Abhorrence of Death; and from hence way proceed ſome ſudden Reluctances, becauſe it is neither within the Power of Reaſon, nor is it the Office of Religion, utterly to exterminate and extinguiſh theſe firſt Motions; but to ſubdue and govern them ſo as that a Man may (after ſome Conflict) purſue the Choice of his Mind notwithſtanding them; and this latter you ſhall ſee them perform.

And then, beſides; you know there are ſome Men of more timorous Natures than others; inſomuch that a great meaſure of Virtue will not do the ſame thing in ſuch, as a leſſer Proportion, aſſiſted by Hardineſs of Temper will do in others. For Nature will be Nature ſtill; and therefore you ſhall obſerve, that even amongſt thoſe that have no Apprehenſion of any thing to come after Death (if we may believe themſelves) and ſo conſequently can have no Cauſe of Fear; yet will be found thoſe that are as timorous as thoſe that expect a Judgment to come. Witneſs your Friend Mr. *H.*

Moreover, you cannot but be aware that a violent Diſeaſe, or Pain, or any of thoſe Forerunners of Death, do ordinarily enfeeble the Operations of the Mind as well as of the Body; and diſorder Men's Reaſon ſo, that it is hard to pronounce of Men's Proweſs by the Combat they then maintain. Therefore the ſureſt way of deciding this matter is, that which I directed you to before; namely, when you ſee a Man in his full Strength, voluntarily and underſtandingly, do that which will certain

ainly draw Death after it; this hath certainly more Bravery and Self-denial in it, more Contempt of Life and the World, and more Arguments of Hopes in another World, than can be drawn from the Contingencies in the very Agony of Death.

Bioph. Well, perhaps it may be ſo: But for God's ſake, Gentlemen, let us wave this uncomfortable Subject. Come, what good News is there ſtirring? *Of News, and Newsmongers expoſed.*

Phil. O Sir, that is a prohibited Commodity you enquire for; neither of us deal in it.

Bioph. Nay, truly, for my Part, I wiſh it had been prohibited ſooner; for there hath been ſo much Knavery and Sophiſtication in it, that ſeveral well-meaning Men have been cheated of their Peace, their Loyalty, and almoſt out of their Wits too by it.

But ſo long as we are not bound to believe all that we hear, we may hear what Men talk of, for our Diverſions.

Sebaſt. Hearing and telling of News ſeems to me to be juſt ſuch another Diverſion as Tipling is: And it is much the ſame thing whether a Man's Head be full of Vapours or Proclamations: Wind in the Brain makes men giddy, as well as Wine; and Men reel and ſtagger to and fro as unſeemly by the Impulſe of uncertain Rumours, as thoſe that are intoxicated with the ſtrongeſt Liquors. Beſides, juſt as he that knows not how to entertain himſelf at home, uſually applies himſelf to the Tavern, or the Ale-houſe, for his Relief; ſo it is the Cuſtom of idle People, and ſuch as are negligent of their own Affairs, to buſy themſelves in matters that do not belong to them. And there is yet another thing worſe than all this; namely, whereas the Tavern Drunkard ſleeps and evaporates his Wine, and comes to himſelf again, the Coffee-

houſe Drunkard ſcarcely ever clearly diſpels thoſe Vapours of News that have filled his Crown.

Bioph. This is ſmartly ſpoken: But however, a Man ſhall look like a Male-content with the Times, or, at leaſt, will ſeem to be unconcerned for his Countrey, that wholly diſregards News.

Sebaſt. With Reverence to publick Opinion, I ſhould think the quite contrary in both Particulars. For in the firſt place, it is notorious that the Male-content is always liſtening after Novelty; and I cannot tell whether his Head be fuller of little Stories, or of Maggots; whereas the Man in good Humour, and contented, minds only his own Buſineſs, and lets it alone to God and the King to govern the World.

And then for the other Particular, it is the eaſieſt thing in the World to obſerve, that your right News-monger cares not a ruſh which End goes forward, or whether the ſtate of things be good or bad for his Countrey, ſo there be News for his own Entertainment.

But after all, now I think better of it, I have a very remarkable Story to tell you: But you are ſo great a Critick you will believe nothing, and therefore I had as good hold my Peace.

Bioph. Nay, good *Sebaſtian*, let us have it: You are a Perſon of good Intelligence, if you will pleaſe to communicate.

Sebaſtian's *ſtrange News of a New-found-land.*

Sebaſt. It is ſo very ſtrange and wonderful News, that I ſuſpect your Faith; but yet it is ſuch as puts me almoſt into an Ecſtaſy every time I think upon it.

Bioph. Do not tantalize us with Expectation, whilſt you raiſe the Value of your Story, nor tempt our Fancies to anticipate and deflower it.

Sebaſt. Why then it is the Diſcovery and Deſcription of a certain Countrey, which is (by relation)

lation) the very Garden and Paradiſe of the whole World, ſo tranſcendently admirable, that *Italy*, *Theſſaly*, or whatſoever you have ſeen or heard of in all your Life is nothing to it.

Bioph. Puh! Who would have expected foreign News after ſuch a Preface? And all but ſome *Iſland of Pines*, I warrant you! Or ſuppoſe it ſhould be true, what can it be to us? However go on *Sebaſtian*; perhaps it may afford us ſome Diverſion.

Sebaſt. I preſaged what Entertainment my News would have with you. What can it be to us, ſay you? Why, when you underſtand all, you will bleſs your ſelf that there is ſuch a Place in the World, which you may go to if you pleaſe, where you may find Retreat from all Troubles at Home, and be happy beyond Imagination: Nay, let me tell you, you muſt, you will go to it if you love your ſelf.

Bioph. You ſpeak at a ſtrange Rate, *Sebaſtian*; a Man would think you were either ſtrangely impoſed upon your ſelf, or elſe that you had very mean Apprehenſions of our Diſcretion. But let it ſuffice to ſay, that, ſoberly ſpeaking, there is no Countrey upon the Face of the Earth can deſerve this Encomium. Beſides, when all is ſaid that can be ſaid, every Man's own Home is his beſt Countrey.

Sebaſt. Why, do you not underſtand me? This which I am ſpeaking of, is, or will be your Home too, at leaſt if you will but take the Pains to travel thither.

Bioph. I marry, thank you for that: But I wiſt it is better to believe than to go look, in this Caſe. What! Change my native Countrey, tranſplant my ſelf at theſe Years! No, I am too old, and have taken too deep Root where I am for that.

Phil.

Phil. Assure your self, *Biophilus*, there is something extraordinary that *Sebastian* expresses himself thus: He is no Hypochondriack, nor whimsical Enthusiast; but a Man of the driest and best tempered Understanding.

Bioph. I have always thought no less, which raises my Wonder now. Come, pray you, *Sebastian*, tell us plainly what you have to say upon good Grounds, concerning this Place which you are in such a Rapture about.

Sebast. In earnest, Sir, I have to say all that is possible to be said, and much more than I can express.

Bioph. So it seems; for I perceive you are so full of it, you cannot vent your self; we must therefore broach you by degrees. In the first Place, let me ask you, what is the Name of this strange Countrey?

Sebast. It is called *Urania*.

Bioph. A romantick Name! But, I pray you, in what Longitude and Latitude is it situate, that a Man may know where to find it, if he should have a Mind to go thither?

Sebast. I am not skilful in that kind of Learning, neither do I remember that it was told me, in those Terms, how the Countrey lies; but perhaps this may tend to your Satisfaction: I am assured that they have no Night or Darkness there, for the Sun never goes off their Horizon; nor are there any long Evenings, and tedious Nights, which we complain of in *England*. By this Character I suppose you may guess at the Latitude of the Place.

An Allegorical Description of the New Countrey.

Bioph. Well, I will consider of that at leisure; in the mean time, tell us what is said to be the Temper of the Air,

Sebast.

Sebaſt. O Sir, the Air is ſweet and temperate beyond Compare; it is *Æther* rather than Air, there is neither violent Heat nor Cold, no diſtinction of Summer and Winter; and indeed, no ſuch thing, but a perpetual Spring; ſo that Flowers bloſſom, and Fruits ripen all the Year long: And by reaſon of this Serenity and Conſtancy of the Air, the Countrey is ſo healthful, that there is never any epidemical or reigning Diſeaſe, no Man feeble and languiſhing; nay, not ſo much as Wrinkles or gray Hairs upon any Man's Head or Face, inſomuch that you would think the Inhabitants were all abſolutely immortal.

Bioph. If that one thing alone be true, I warrant you the Countrey wants no People.

Sebaſt. O very populous: Yet by reaſon of its prodigious Fruitfulneſs it can never be overſtock'd, for they ſay it yields a freſh Harveſt of all kind of Fruits every Month, and that a moſt abundant one, foraſmuch as no Weeds, nor Thorns and Briars grow there, but only that which is good for the Uſe of Man; and, which is moſt of all wonderful, all this is brought forth ſpontaneouſly, without the Toil and Labour of Man.

They ſay alſo there are no kind of wild Beaſts there, either to affright and annoy the People, or to devour the Fruits of the Land; nay not ſo much as any Serpents, or other venomous Creatures, or troubleſome Inſects: And all this is owing to the Clemency of the Air, the peculiar Nature of the Soil, together with God's Bleſſing upon both.

Bioph. I perceive a Man may eat well; and when he hath ſo done, may ſleep in a whole Skin there; that I like, and I would to God it were not a Romance which you give us. But go on, *Sebaſtian:* What is the Polity and Government of the Countrey?

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt The Government is perfectly monarchical, and the Prince is abſolute; yet I do not hear that any of his Subjects wear *Wooden Shooes*, or feed upon *Cabbage*; but all of them enjoy their Liberty and Property as ſecurely and fully as in any Commonwealth in the World.

There is no ſquabling about Privileges, no interfering between Prerogative and Immunities, Dominion and common Right: The King commands what he will, and the People willingly obey him; for his Wiſdom and Goodneſs moderate his Will and Power, better than all the Boundaries of written Laws.

And this I am informed of too, that tho' there be ſeveral Degrees of Subjects, as there are amongſt us, becauſe otherwiſe there could be no ſufficient Encouragement to Induſtry, nor no Capacity in the Prince to ſet Marks of Favour upon thoſe that deſerve extraordinarily of him: Yet from hence ariſe no Emulations amongſt the Nobility, nor any Oppreſſion of the Commons: The People do not envy and murmur againſt the great ones; nor, on the other ſide, do they, as greater Fiſh devour the leſſer.

Bioph. A rare Temper of Government, this! and not leſs admirable than that of the Air you ſpoke of before: You amaze me ſtrangely. But what are the ſtaple Commodities of the Countrey?

Sebaſt. As for that, you muſt know, it is not with *Urania*, as with moſt other Countries; where uſually one Province abounds with what another wants, and the other needs what that can ſpare; and ſo there is a Neceſſity of reciprocal Intercourſe between them, both to relieve their Neceſſities mutually, and to diſcharge their Superfluities: And herein, you know, lies both the Reaſon of Trade, and the Security of Alliances between

tween ſeveral Countries in our Parts of the World. But *Urania* being (as was wont to be ſaid of *Ægypt*) a Countrey ſelf-ſufficient, depends not at all upon foreign Commerce; and therefore as it needs nothing from abroad, ſo conſequently it ſends out few or none of thoſe Commodities it abounds with; but rather (as I ſhall tell you by and by) invites Foreigners to come over to them, and reſide amongſt them, and ſo to partake freely of the Advantages of that happy Land.

Yet I muſt tell you they have very great Rarities in thoſe Parts, and ſuch as are exceedingly deſired by all other People that underſtand the worth of them: As, in particular, to ſpecify ſome few, which are not at all to be found any where elſe.

In the firſt Place, they have the true *Elixir Vitæ*, a very precious Balm, far beyond that of *Gilead*, that perfectly cures all Diſeaſes, both inward and outward, I had almoſt ſaid of Body and Mind. This operates without any Pain to the Patient; and in outward Applications, heals all kind of Wounds, and leaves no Scar or Mark behind it.

They have alſo an admirable Water, which ſo quickens all the Senſes, and peculiarly the Sight, that a Man by the Help of it ſhall ſee farther than by a Teleſcope, and pierce into the very Secrets of Nature.

The common Food of the Countrey is ſomewhat anſwerable to the Deſcription of *Manna*; and hath that peculiar Taſte which every Man affects, and ſatisfies all the Powers of Nature. They have alſo a delicious Wine called *Lacrymæ Chriſti*, which amongſt other Virtues makes Men forget all Sorrows whatſoever: And this they uſually drink in an Amethyſt Cup which preſerves them

from Surfeits or Intemperance, what proportion ſoever they drink.

Amongſt the reſt, they have a ſort of *Nitre*, ſo very powerful and abſterſive, that it takes away all Spots, Blemiſhes, and Aſperſions, and makes thoſe that uſe it ſo very beautiful, that they raviſh the Eyes of Beholders.

It were endleſs to go about to enumerate the Commodities of this Countrey, which clearly outgoes the *Holy-Land*, tho' it was ſaid that in *Solomon's* Days, Gold and Silver were there as common as the Stones of the Street. And for Proof of it, the Inhabitants are generally ſo rich and proſperous, that there is not one poor Man in the whole Land; not one to be found that doth need, or will ask an Alms. The hungry and naked, thoſe grievous Spectacles, (too ſadly common in moſt other Places) are not to be ſeen there; of which amongſt other Cauſes, theſe are aſſigned, *viz.* There is no ſordid and cruel Miſer there, who hoards up what others ſhould live upon; nor is there any waſteful Glutton or Epicure, who devours his own and other Folks Portion too. In ſhort, they ſay, all deſirable things are there in ſuch abundance, that every Man is as rich, as full, and as happy as he pleaſes.

Bioph. If all this was poſſible to be true, which I muſt beg your Pardon to declare I have not Faith enough to believe, yet the Felicity of this Countrey could not be long-liv'd; for it will certainly derive upon itſelf the Envy of all its Neighbours; and the Effect of that will be, that thoſe who have the beſt Iron will quickly become Maſters of this Wealth.

Sebaſt. Nay, *Biophilus*, as for that there is no Danger, for the Countrey is altogether inacceſſible, ſave only by one narrow Way; and that is ſo well

well guarded and defended, that to this Day no Enemy hath ever had the Confidence to aſſail it. And beſides, all the Inhabitants are in ſuch perfect Peace and Amity one with another, and maintain ſo inviolably their Allegiance towards their Sovereign, that as no Foreigner hath any Encouragement to Enterprize upon them by Treachery, ſo neither can he, without mighty Folly, think himſelf conſiderable enough to prevail by Force againſt ſuch an united Strength.

Bioph. Now you ſpeak of that, I pray give me leave to ask you one Queſtion more: What is the Humour of the People, both amongſt themſelves, and towards Strangers?

Sebaſt. This is as admirable in its kind, as any thing I have told you yet. The Complexion of the People is ſaid to be univerſally ſanguine, and conſequently they are ſprightly and cheerful, ingenious and complaiſant, open-hearted and yet grave, without Fraud, and without Jealouſy; they neither intend any Hurt, nor do they ſuſpect any. Amongſt other Inſtances of their ſedate Chearfulneſs, they are exceedingly addicted to Muſick; and their Songs are obſerved to be compoſed, for the moſt part, in Praiſe of their Prince, the Splendor of his Court, the Glory of his Atchievements, and the Felicity of his Reign.

So far are they from Wrath and Choler, that in the Memory of Man there hath not been one Law-Suit commenced amongſt them; and, which is more, not one Theological Diſputation which uſually are attended with ſo much Heat and Animoſity in theſe Parts of the World. But as for Tale-bearers, Whiſperers, Back-biters, and all that melancholy and envious Brood, there is not one of them to be found in all the Countrey; every Man there loves his Neighbour as himſelf, and is

as

as tender of his Intereſt and Reputation as of his own.

And then, for their Temper and Carriage towards Strangers, they are infinitely civil and obliging: They deride not other Mens Habit, or Mien, or Language, or Cuſtoms, or Complexions; but contrariwiſe, whenſoever any ſuch come amongſt them; they welcome them heartily, treat them with all Inſtances of Hoſpitality, and by all poſſible Obligations and Endearments invite them to become one People with themſelves, and, as much as in them lies, are ready to contribute their Aſſiſtance towards their Voyage.

Bioph. This is a very ſtrange Relation as ever I heard in my Life. But, in plain *Engliſh*, it is too good to be true. All this can amount to no more than to ſome *Utopia*, or new *Atlantis*. Pardon my Freedom, good *Sebaſtian:* I acknowledge you a wiſe and a learned Gentleman; that Character all the World allows you: But in this particular Story, ſome body hath unworthily abuſed your good Nature; for it can be no better than a Fiction, a Legend, a mere Flam.

Sebaſtian *relates the Grounds of the Credibility of his Story.*

Sebaſt. You do not ordinarily think a Man bound to warrant the News he tells you, but you uſed to be contented to take it as he hath it; and I am ſure you will not allow me to preſcribe to you what you ſhall believe. However, I aſſure you, upon the Word of a Gentleman, and a Chriſtian, I have not deviſed it of my own Head, but am as well ſatisfied of the Truth and Reality of the Relation I have made to you, as it is poſſible for me to be of any thing which I have not ſeen with my Eyes; and I am very confident I have as good Grounds for my Perſuaſion, as it is fit for a diſcreet Man to require in ſuch a Caſe.

Bioph.

Bioph. I wiſh you could ſatisfy me as well, I pray therefore do us the favour to let us know what probabilities you go upon in this matter.

Sebaſt. They ſay, we *Engliſhmen* (above all People) love to be cheated, and encourage Impoſtors by our Credulity. But if that be the Humour of our Countreymen, I muſt beg their Pardon if I little vary from them in that Particular. I confeſs I am not ſo ill natured, as to ſuſpect that every Body I converſe with, hath Deſigns upon me; or yet am I ſo ſupinely ſoft and credulous, as to be at every Body's Mercy; or ſo greedy of News as to ſwallow all that comes without chewing. And, as to the Buſineſs before us, I poſitively affirm to you, I had this ſtrange Relation (as you eſteem it) from one that came from the Place, and was an Eye-witneſs of what he reported, and therefore could not be deceived himſelf in what he related. And then, his Quality was ſuch, as that he could have no Intereſt to impoſe upon me herein; for he was no leſs a Man than the only Son of the great Monarch of the Countrey; and he came as Ambaſſador extraordinary from the King, his Father, on purpoſe to invite and incline our People to participate of that happy Region, and of all the admirable Advantages aforeſaid; and aſſured us, that all which came ſhould be free Denizons of *Urania*.

Bioph. Ay, good *Sebaſtian*, he told you ſo; but how are you ſure he was not an Impoſtor, and deſigned to put Tricks upon you and our good natured Countreymen?

Sebaſt. As for that his very Perſon and Mien ſpake for him; both which were ſo auguſt and grand, as that no mean Man could bear out the Port he uſed. Beſides this, he came not in a clandeſtular Way, but made his publick Entry, and his Train and Equipage was grave and majeſtick,

like himself, far beyond the empty Pomp and Pageantry of a Counterfeit. His Commission and Letters credential also were publickly seen, read and allowed; and they were sealed with such a Seal, as no Wit of Man could imitate or counterfeit.

Add unto all this, I have seen the Map or Chart of the Countrey, I have perused the Digest of the Laws of the Kingdom, these Eyes have read the Records of their History, and with this Mouth I have tasted the delicious Fruits of the Land. What would you have more to justify the Matter of Fact?

Bioph. What would I have more! Why, I think you venture too great a Stock in one Bottom: I would not trust to any one Man, whatsoever he were, in a Relation of this Nature; I should require to see and speak with many about it before I would believe it.

Sebast. You say well. But can you think it reasonable to require, that so great a Prince should send many Ambassadors on such an Errand, when he aims not at his own Greatness, or the accommodating of his own Affairs, nor hath any need of our Alliance or Assistance; but merely designs our Benefit? Or can you expect that he should send every Day fresh Envoys, and that not only to whole Countries, but to every individual Person too? And if you could imagine such a Prince should condescend to this also, can you think it would be easy to find many fit Persons for such a Purpose, who would be willing to forsake the Glories of such a Court, or the Contentments of Home in such a Region; and to expose themselves to the Difficulties and Hazards of Travel, as well as to the Change of Air and Diet, and a thousand other Inconveniences attendant upon such an Expedition? No, *Biophilus*, it was an Instance of

wonderful

wonderful Goodneſs, that ſuch a Prince ſhould end one Ambaſſador on ſuch an Errand; and admirable Charity and Self-denial in him that undertook and performed it.

Bioph. You ſpeak Reaſon I muſt acknowledge, in that Particular. But yet I can never believe, that if there were any ſuch Countrey as your Intelligence amounts to, it ſhould lie undiſcovered to theſe Parts of the World until now. What! *Drake*, *Cavendiſh*, *Columbus*, *Davis*, —— none of them, in all their Travels, take notice of ſuch a Place; nor give the leaſt Intimation of it until now.

Sebaſt. That is no ſuch ſtrange thing as you make it; if you call to Mind how long a time it was before the World would believe there were *Antipodes*, and yet it is plain that ſo long one full half of the World was unknown to the other. Or, if you remember, that Time was, (and that not an ignorant Age neither) when the *Roman* Empire was thought to embrace the whole Earth, which, as now we are certain, took not in one fifth (perhaps not one tenth) of it. Do you not know that *Hercules*'s Pillars were accounted the Boundaries of humane Travels; and that, for a great many Ages, both the torrid and the frigid Zones (as they are called) were eſteemed uninhabitable; and all that time the World was ignorant of itſelf? Beſides, you know it is not very long ſince thoſe vaſt Tracts of Land, the *Weſt-Indies*, were firſt diſcovered by ſome of the Perſons you have named. And, to ſay no more, I pray, how many Ages paſſed over the Heads of Mankind, before this our native Countrey of *Britain* (as conſiderable as it is, and we juſtly eſteem it) came into any Knowledge or Conſideration with the reſt of the World? Think it not ſtrange therefore if *Urania* was ſo lately diſcovered.

Biaph. But that which I principally intended to ſay, was this: You afford me matter of great Wonder, that you ſhould be ſo much concerned for a Place very newly diſcovered (if it be diſcovered); but eſpecially, that you ſhould believe ſo many ſtrange things of it, before any one Perſon hath gone from hence, and returned hither again, to confirm thoſe Reports of it.

Sebaſt. Ifs and Exceptions are endleſs; and I know no Way to make a Man believe, that hath no Mind to it: Yet I will give you all the Satisfaction I am able, and that which I think is ſufficient in ſuch a Caſe. You muſt know therefore that this Countrey hath not been wholly undiſcovered until now, as you ſuppoſe; for I my ſelf have ſeen a Book of great Authority and Antiquity, which, tho' ſomewhat obſcurely and figuratively written, yet certainly pointed at ſuch a Place, and in ſome Meaſure deſcribed it too, to him that attentively read and conſidered it. And beſides, there are ſome very credible Relations concerning ſome certain Perſons, that have hitherto made very fortunate Voyages thither.

But as to that you object, that no Man hath gone from hence thither, and returned again to us to bring us the Tidings; you will eaſily ſatisfy your ſelf therein, if you conſider what I intimated before, *viz.* That thoſe who once get thither, can have no Inclinations to make a Change ſo much to their Diſadvantage, as it muſt needs be for them to return hither again. Beſides, tho' they ſay the Paſſage is not long thither, yet it is no common Road; and therefore very few will (at leaſt unneceſſarily) undertake it.

Preparations for the Journey to Urania.

Phil. But if it be an untraced Path, how ſhall a Man find the Way thither, if he have a Mind to go.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. O *Philander!* There is no great difficulty in that, if a Man be well reſolved on the Buſineſs; for beſides a Chart, and very punctual Inſtructions which the Ambaſſador left behind him for that purpoſe when he was amongſt us, there are great ſtore of very skilful and faithful Guides and Pilots, who freely offer their Service, and will not fail, with God's Bleſſing to land us ſafe there.

Phil. I cannot tell what *Biophilus* thinks of this Buſineſs; but for my part, *Sebaſtian*, I am ſo raviſhed with your Relation, that if there be ſuch a Place in the World, I will find it out, by God's Help. I thank God I am no Male-content, either with my native Countrey, or my private Fortunes; yet I ſee no Reaſon we ſhould, like Muſhrooms, live and die upon the ſame Spot, and be a mere *Acceſſio Soli*, or Heir-lomes to the Place where we happen to be born; eſpecially if we may thus much mend our ſelves by the Change. I am a Citizen of the World, and that ſhall be my Countrey where I can fare beſt.

But will you go with me, *Sebaſtian?* Then I ſhall not be only out of all doubt of the Truth of your Narrative, when I ſee you ſo far believe it your ſelf, as to adventure all upon it; but I ſhall with much more Cheerfulneſs change my Countrey, when I do not change my Friend, nor forego your Company.

Sebaſt. Obligingly ſpoken, and bravely reſolved, *Philander:* By God's Grace I will go with you; and to aſſure you of my Intentions, I will now acquaint you that I have been this good while in ſetting things in order, and in making Preparations for the Voyage.

Phil. But how ſhall we diſpoſe of our Eſtates here? And what Commodities had we beſt to furniſh our ſelves with, to carry over with us?

Sebaſt. As for the Diſpoſal of our preſent Fortunes I can tell you, there are very ſure Returns betwixt this Countrey and that; for the Prince himſelf will be your Security, if you put your Effects into ſuch Hands as he hath appointed. But as for Merchandiſe to carry with us, there will be no need of that; for the Countrey which we have in our Eye is ſo glorioufly rich and plentiful, the Prince is ſo noble and benign, and all the Inhabitants ſo kind and charitable, that we ſhall be ſure as ſoon as ever we come there, to be furniſhed *gratis* with all that our Hearts can wiſh. And moreover, if we ſhould put our ſelves to the trouble of tranſporting our Baggage with us, it would not only incumber us in our Journey, but would alſo ſeem to be ſuch mere Traſh and Lumber when you come there, that we ſhould be aſhamed of it, and of our ſelves too, for ſetting ſuch a Value upon it.

But there is another thing, and much more material, which I muſt needs tell you of, in order to our more favourable Reception when we come there; that is, we muſt before hand quite alter our Habit and Garb, and not ſo much as ſmell of the Earth we came from. Amongſt other things we muſt diſuſe our ſelves from Onions and Garlick, and from Fleſh too, that we may the eaſier accord with the Diet of the Countrey: And we muſt refine our Spirits, that we may be fit to breathe in that pure Air: And having ſo done, there needs no more but to carry with us great Minds and large Souls, to qualify us, both for the Society and Enjoyments there.

Phil. Thank you, dear Friend, and Fellow-Traveller (for ſo I will henceforth ſtyle you) for theſe Inſtructions: I will uſe the beſt of my Endeavours to be fitted accordingly. But is there any thing elſe that I need to be adviſed in?

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. O, yes; there is one thing more which I doubt you do not think of; and I am ſomewhat afraid leſt the mention of it ſhould diſcourage you; but it muſt be, and there is no avoiding it.

Phil. In the Name of God, what is it? Miſtruſt not my Courage or Conſtancy: I'll ſtick at nothing that croſſes my way to *Urania*.

Sebaſt. You remember I have intimated to you already, that when we come at the Countrey we deſign, we ſhall be immortal, we can never die afterwards; but we muſt die before hand, or we ſhall never come thither. This is the Pinch of the Buſineſs: What think you of it now, *Philander?*

Phil. Never the worſe for that Fellow-Traveller. But, good Lord! What a Dream have I been in all this while? I thought verily you had ſpoken hiſtorical Truth of ſome rare earthly Countrey: But now my Eyes are open? and I perceive you mean Heaven; that's the *Urania* you have all this while amuſed us with. Now I can unriddle the whole Buſineſs: I have now a Clue to guide me through the Maze of your Diſcourſe, and can decypher all the Figures you have uſed. I am ſure 'tis Heaven only can anſwer the Character you have given: That is the Place where there is no Pain, Sickneſs, nor Death; there is no Night nor Darkneſs, but a perpetual Day; there is to be found the true Balſam that cures all the Diſtempers and Wounds, both of Body and Mind; there are to be had all the other Rarities which you have mentioned; *Jeſus Chriſt* is the Ambaſſador from God Almighty, that invites us thither. All is plain and eaſy now. How dull was I, that I could not underſtand you ſooner?

Bioph. And have you drolled with us all this while, *Sebaſtian?* Have you wheedled me back

again into the Subject I declined? Is your famous *Uramia* in another World? I thought your News was impossible to be true, and now you as good as confess it.

Sebast. By your Pardon, *Biophilus*, have I done you any Wrong? You asked for News, and I have told you good and true News; News of more Importance, and more comfortable than any the Coffee-house affords; not ill-natured Stories of Whig and Tory, nor Surmises about *France* and *Italy*, *Turk* and Count *Teckley*; but a great Truth of a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, a Kingdom wherein there is Righteousness and Justice, Unity and Joy, Love and good Will, everlasting Peace and everlasting Life; a State of that Felicity, that it is able to make us weary of this World, and to render the Time of our Life tedious to us, till we come to the Enjoyment of it; in a Word, that is sufficient to make all the Ways of Virtue seem easy and delectable, and even Death itself desirable in the Way thither.

What think you of it, *Philander*, now you understand what Countrey it is I persuaded you to? Doth your Mind hold for the Voyage? Will you go on with your Preparations for it, as we were discoursing before? Will you venture to shoot the Gulph, that you may arrive at it?

Philander *transported with the Contemplation of Heaven.*

Phil. Yes, Fellow-Traveller, I hold my Resolution. For tho' I find I was mistaken in the Particular, yet not in the general; it was an earthly Paradise that I had in my Thoughts all the while you were discoursing figuratively to us, and I had no other Apprehensions of your Design; and therein *Biophilus* was more in the right than I, who was confident there could be no such Countrey in this World as you described. But I heartily thank you

you for the Deception; you have cheated us into our own Advantage. And now that I understand you, I do not change my Course, tho' I change my Port; I hope I shall not be so absurd, as to be more in earnest for an earthly Countrey than for an heavenly.

Who would not gladly be at everlasting Rest, and in an unchangeable Condition? We are *but Pilgrims and Strangers in this World*; but there we shall be at Home, and in our Father's House: Here we are continually tossed with Winds and Seas, tormented betwixt Hopes and Fears; there we come into Harbour, and shall be safe as upon a Rock, stable and settled as the Mountains.

Who can chuse but wish to live for ever, and would not be contented to die once, that he might be out of the Reach of Chance or Danger for ever after? Everlasting Life! What an Ocean of Joy and Felicity is contained in it! It puts me into an Ecstacy to think of it? Surely he doth not love himself, or doth not understand himself, who would not gladly leave an uncertain, troublesome, quarrelsome, foolish, disputing, suspicious, envious World, upon far easier Terms than the Attainment of it. But to live with the ever blessed *Jesus*, to spend Eternity in the Society of good and wise, kind and peaceable Men, to enter into everlasting Friendships, inviolable Peace, unchangeable Felicity; I am ravished and transported with the Thoughts of it!

When once I had the Happiness to take notice of a poor Man, blind from his Mother's Womb, who never had seen the Sun, nor could have any Notion of Beauty or Colours, nor of any of that Variety of delightful Objects which the Eye and Light present to us, and entertain us with; when afterwards, (I say) by a strange Cure, this poor Man had his Eyes opened, and found a Croud of

new

new Delights preſs in upon him, he thought himſelf ſurrounded with Miracles, and was almoſt diſtracted with Wonder. And certainly no leſs, but a great deal more will our Surprize be when we come to Heaven; where, probably, we ſhall have new Powers opened which ſhall diſcover ſuch Glories to us as we were not capable of perceiving before, if they had been preſented to us: But moſt certainly we ſhall have then new Objects of Delight to entertain thoſe Powers we have, and thoſe tranſcendent to all we ever had Experience of before.

Or when I think of the Children of *Iſrael*'s firſt coming out of *Ægypt*, where they had lived for ſome hundred of Years in the Condition of Slaves, under the jealous Eye of a barbarous Prince, treated with Hardſhip and Severity, and expoſed to all the Indignities, Inſolences and Cruelty of a faithleſs and ingrateful People; and then, after this, (leaping, as we ſay, out of the Frying-Pan into the Fire) were carried into a vaſt and howling Wilderneſs; and there ſpending forty Years more amidſt Seas and Mountains, in Danger of wild Beaſts, and beſet with Enemies; having no City of Refuge, no ſtrong Holds, no Friends, no Allies, no Comfort or Supplies, but from Hand to Mouth: When (I ſay) theſe poor People arrived at laſt at the promiſed Land, the Land of *Canaan*, a Land of Olive-Yards and Vine-Yards, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, and the Glory of all Lands, and found themſelves peaceably poſſeſs'd of it, under their own God, their own Prince, and their own Laws; and flowing in ſuch Plenty of all good things, that they now became the Admiration and Envy of all their Neighbours, who had been the Subject of their Contempt and Scorn before; I can but fanſie how they were aſtoniſhed at the Change, what

a Won-

a Wonder they were to themſelves: And I am apt to believe, that for ſome time after they could not but ſuſpect they were under a pleaſant Illuſion of Fancy, and that all their Felicity was no better than a Dream.

So, aſſuredly, when we ſhall firſt come to *Heaven*, our ſpiritual *Canaan*, to the Enjoyment of an Happineſs of God's preparing, who hath all the Ingredients of Felicity in his Power, and infinite Wiſdom to contrive and compound them, and unſpeakable Goodneſs to beſtow them; and who, as the Scripture expreſſes it, hath, from the Beginning of the World, been deſigning and preparing ſuch a Syſtem of Joy and Felicity, as may at once both moſt delight his Creatures, and diſplay all his aforeſaid Attributes: When (I ſay) we ſhall firſt obſerve the ſtrange Change between a narrow, ſtingy, neceſſitous, unquiet, ſickly, peeviſh, and contentious World, which we have left behind us, and the Settlement and Peace, Plenty and Glory, of that we enter upon; it will not be eaſy for us (without larger Minds than we have now) to know how to behave our ſelves; we ſhall be apt to be oppreſſed with Wonder, and, if it were poſſible, to die with Exceſs of Joy.

Sebaſt. You ſpeak bravely and ſenſibly, dear *Phil.* You ſeem to have gone up to Mount *Nebo*, and to have fed your Eyes with the Proſpect of the Holy Land: But have you conſidered the Difficulties of the Way, as well as the Happineſs of the Journey's End? Will you not, like the *Iſraelites*, (you ſpake of even now) repent, and bethink your ſelf of turning back when you encounter Difficulty or Danger? Will not Death affright you when it appears in all its diſmal Pomp? Will you not ſhrink when you ſhall come to be ſtripped naked of all your wordly Habiliments? Will you

not

not have a lingring after your old Accommodations, your fine Houſe, rich Furnitures, pleaſant Garden, ſprightly Wines, or any other Pleaſures and Entertainments of the Body?

Phil. No, no, *Sebaſtian*, I will go to Heaven, whatever come of it. What can diſcourage a Man when Heaven is at ſtake? If the Journey put me to a little Trouble, there is Reſt at the End of it. What is it to exerciſe a little Patience, when a Man ſhall be crowned at laſt? Who would not run, ſtrive, do, or ſuffer any thing, and venture all upon ſuch a Wager?

Chriſtian Reſolution.

Shall I be frighted with Death? That will come however; and I am ſure the neglecting eternal Life is not the Way to eſcape it.

Shall I be ſolicitous for my Eſtate and worldly Accommodations, when I know, whether I go to Heaven or no, I muſt ſhortly leave them all behind me? And ſurely if they cannot ſave me from Death, they ought not to hinder me of eternal Life.

Or ſhall I hanker after Onions and Garlick, and the Fleſh-Pots of *Ægypt*, as you called the Pleaſures of the Body, which will certainly forſake me, if I do not forſake them firſt? No, I have counted the Coſt, there is nothing ſhall diſcourage me by the Grace of God; I will go to Heaven. But, I pray, let us not part Company; let us go to Heaven together.

The Advantages of good Company in the Way to Heaven.

Sebaſt. With all my Heart, dear Friend; for tho' I doubt we muſt not expect much Company with us, yet perfect Solitude is ſomewhat uncomfortable; and there are great Advantages of Society. For, if any Body ſhould be ſo abſurd as to laugh at us on our Journey, we can the better deſpiſe them. If either

ther of us ſhould happen to be heavy and weary in our Way, we may animate and quicken one another. If any Difficulty befall, that may be too hard for any one of us, by our united Strength we may be able to encounter and remove it. If either of us ſhould ſwerve a little out of the narrow Way, towards the Right-Hand, or towards the Left, the other may recall and rectify him. Beſides, the great additional Comfort it will be when we come at our Journey's End, not only that we ſee one another happy, and enjoy one another's Society; but eſpecially when we reflect upon the good Service we have done to one another in bringing each other thither, we ſhall have our Joys re-doubled by the Reflexion, and feel not only our own individual Shares, but that alſo of each other.

Phil. Happily thought of, Fellow-Traveller, but will not *Biophilus* go with us too? What ſay you, Sir?

Biopb. You are honeſt Gentlemen, and my good Friends: But, Lord, What Romances do you make! What Caſtles do you build in the Air! And what Shadows do you feed your ſelves withal! You talk of Heaven as confidently as if you had travelled an hundred times through all the Regions of it; or rather, indeed, as if you had viſited the World in the Moon. But when all is done, did ever you, or any Body elſe, ſee ſuch a Place as Heaven? For God's ſake, therefore, leave theſe Enthuſiaſtical Whimſies, and talk like Men: Speak of ſomething that is certain and viſible, or probable at leaſt; and do not forego Subſtance for Shadows, Certainties for Uncertainties.

Scepticiſm diſplaying its Humour, and check'd by ſober Reaſon.

Phil. God help you, good Neighbour, in Requital of the Caution you give us. Aſſure your ſelf,

ſelf, we have the ſame Senſes, and the ſame Self-love that you have; and only wiſh you had the ſame Faith that we have. We are not willing to part with Certainties for Uncertainties; for if Heaven be not certain, we are ſure nothing elſe is. And as for the things of this World, they are ſo far from it, that nothing is more certain than that we muſt part with them ſhortly whether we will or no. But as for the other World, we know whom we have believed.

Bioph. I tell you all is but Dream and Fancy; there is no Proof in the World for it. All you have to ſay is, that Men muſt believe: As if you ſhould ſay, ſhut your Eyes and ſee; you perſuade a Man to find the Way to Heaven blindfold. No, give me good Proof, or I'll not ſtir a Foot: With me ſeeing is believing.

Phil. Remember your ſelf, good Neighbour: Are not you a Chriſtian? Do you not believe that *Jeſus Chriſt* came from Heaven on purpoſe to make Diſcovery of thoſe celeſtial Regions, and to ſhew us the Way thither? And did not he confirm his Report to us by undeniable Miracles? Did he not come into the World miraculouſly, and return thither again viſibly! Did he not from thence ſend down admirable Tokens of his Preſence and Authority there, eſpecially on the famous Day of *Pentecoſt?* Beſides, do you not ſee all wiſe Men provide for another World; and that generally good and virtuous Men, when they come to die, are raviſhed with Joy in Contemplation of it, as if they really ſaw Heaven open to receive them?

Bioph. Whether or no I believe as much as you do, yet I believe this one thing inſtead of all the reſt, that we are born to be cheated. For, what with the Illuſions of our own melancholy Fancies, what by the Prejudices of our Education, and the impe-

imperious Dictates of others; what by the Authority of unaccountable Tradition, and publick Fame; and what by the Deſigns of Politicians, it is an hard Matter to know what elſe to believe.

Phil. Indeed, *Biophilus*, I am both ſorry and aſhamed to hear you talk at this rate. And I do not wonder now, that you were ſo deſirous to decline this ſort of Diſcourſe when we fell upon it. I hope you take me for your Friend, as well as your Neighbour, and *Sebaſtian* here for a diſcreet and worthy Gentleman: Suffer your ſelf to be perſuaded by us to think and ſpeak more ſoberly, and becoming your ſelf in theſe great Matters; or if you will not think like a Chriſtian, yet talk like a Man; for, let me tell you, you ſeem not only to reject Chriſtianity, but all Religion in general; and upon thoſe Terms you will be as little fit for this World, as for that which is to come.

For, what a ſad Creature is a Man of no Religion at all? What State or civil Government will be able to endure him, whom no Oaths can oblige, or faſten upon? How can there be any civil Society with him that hath no Faith, that can neither truſt, nor be truſted? What ſecurity can ſuch a Man give, that he ſhall not diſturb the State, violate the Perſon of his Prince, falſify his Truſt, betray his Friend, cut his Neighbour's Throat, if he be under the Awe of no God, the Expectation of no Rewards nor Puniſhments in another World? What Security can there be, I ſay, in dealing with ſuch a Man, what Sincerity in his Friendſhip, what Safety in his Neighbourhood? For all theſe depend upon the Reverence of Religion, which he that is wholly deſtitute of, muſt needs become *devotum caput*, a Wolf's Head, the Peſt and Vermine of humane Society.

Do not therefore, dear *Biophilus*, at once both ſtifle your own Conſcience, and affront the common Senſe and Reaſon of Mankind. Do not, under the pretence of being more witty and ſagacious than other Men, reaſon your ſelf into Brutality; and whilſt you grow over-wiſe in your own Eyes, be the moſt fatally miſtaken, and loſt for ever.

Why ſhould you abandon your ſelf to Deſperation, and leave your ſelf without any Refuge in Adverſity? We are well and chearful here at preſent, God be thanked; but the Time will come when God will ſtand us in ſtead, when we ſhall have need of the Retreats and Comforts of Religion. Above all things in the World, leave not your ſelf without Hope in your latter End; do as becometh a Man of your Parts and Diſcretion, ſuſpect your own Suſpicions, and let not the Opinion you have, that other Men are under Prejudices, prejudice you againſt Arguments for believing. Come, deal ingeniouſly, and open your Breaſt, propound the Grounds of your Suſpicions, the Objections you have againſt Religion; and tho' I cannot promiſe you that I will anſwer them all to your Satisfaction, yet I doubt not but there is one that will.

Bioph. Look you, Gentlemen, you put me into a great Strait, for if, upon this Invitation of yours, I do not diſcloſe my Mind to you, I ſhall ſeem diſingenuous, and you will think worſe of me than perhaps I deſerve; and, on the other ſide, if I do diſcover my Sentiments, it is probable that my Creed will fall ſo many Articles ſhort of yours, that we ſhall break out into ſome Heats, and endanger the Continuance of our neighbourly Converſation. However, ſince it ſeems to be your Deſire, I will be plain with you, in Confidence that, as you are Gentlemen, you will deal ingeni-

ouſly with me; and if you can do me no good, you will do me no hurt. My meaning is, that if it ſhould happen you do not convince my Reaſon, I hope you will not defame my Perſon, nor expoſe me to the Inſolences of the Rabble, who believe in groſs, and by wholeſale, and throw Dirt upon all that chew what they ſwallow.

The Epicurean Creed.

Now, in the firſt Place, that you may not think me a perfect Sceptick, I declare to you that I acknowledge the Being of a God; and that not only becauſe the Generality of Mankind, and even *Epicurus* himſelf owned ſo much, but becauſe it is not conceivable how the World ſhould be without one; for no Wit or Reaſon of Man can evince to me, how any thing ſhould begin to be, without ſome neceſſary and eternal Exiſtent, to begin the Motion, and to bring it into Being; or, which is the ſame thing in Effect, there can be no ſecond Cauſe if there be no firſt.

But then, beyond this, you muſt pardon me; for, to deal ſincerely with you, I do not think that this God minds or troubles himſelf about the World after he hath made it: Much leſs do I ſee any ſufficient Ground for that which *Philander* hath been talking ſo warmly about; namely, a World to come. And for eternal Life, (which Men ſpeak ſuch great things of) I profeſs I look upon it as a flat Impoſſibility; for as much as I ſee Men die, but ſee no Foundation for a Belief, that there is any Life or Exiſtence out of a Body.

There are ſome other Points of Affinity with theſe, that I with-hold my Aſſent from; But becauſe you have challenged me to a rational Debate, therefore, to give fair Play, and to put the Buſineſs between us to an Iſſue, I will inſiſt but upon one Point, and that ſhall be the ſame which we fell into by chance at our firſt coming together; name-

ly, whether there be ſuch a thing as a publick Tribunal or general Judgment, where Men's Actions ſhall be reviewed and cenſured after this Life. Prove me but this one Point ſufficiently and plainly, and I will grant you all the reſt.

Sebaſt. Now you ſhew your ſelf a Man, and a ſhrewd one too, tho' not a Chriſtian: For I muſt acknowledge that you have with great Judgment pitch'd upon the very Cardinal Point of Religion; and which if it be proved, (as I do not doubt but it ſhall be) will inferr all the reſt; but if it miſcarry, all falls with it. The Perſuaſion of a Judgment to come is the great Awe upon Men's Conſciences, the principal Motive of Virtue and Piety, the Reſtraint and Check upon Vice and Wickedneſs, and, indeed, the Sinew of civil Government, and Bond of humane Society. This both ſuppoſes the Being of a God, (which you grant) and of a Providence alſo, (which you deny;) for if there were no God, it is evident there could be no Providence in this World, nor Judgment in another: And this, if it be granted, or proved, neceſſarily draws after it Rewards and Puniſhments in the Life to come; for otherwiſe a Judgment would be but a Matter of Curioſity, and a Trouble to no Purpoſe. You have therefore in making Choice of this for the critical or deciſive Point, given great Proof of your own Sagacity, and put the Matter upon a right Iſſue.

The great Conſequence and general Influence of the Belief of a Judgment.

Bioph. Well, prove it then.

Sebaſt. What Proof do you require of this? Why ſhould not the Teſtimony of the Holy Scripture ſatisfy you? For, in the firſt Place, if there be a God (which you have acknowledg'd) you cannot but think it reaſonable, that if he intends to judge the World, he ſhould give ſome Intima-

tion

tion of it to the Sons of Men before-hand, since they must needs be so highly concerned in the Knowledge of it. And then, in the next Place, the Scripture cannot be denied to be as expres's and full in this particular, as it is possible for Words to make it. There God declares and confirms it innumerable times, and the more to awaken Men to the Consideration of it, and Preparation of it; for he is said to have appointed a set Time for it, he hath foretold who shall be the Judge, with what Pomp and Retinue he shall come attended, what Measures he shall proceed by, and what shall be the Circumstances of that great Solemnity.

Bioph. Excuse me there, *Sebastian*; I am not to be born down by Authority, but convinced by Reason. If you will do any good upon me, you must deal with me as a Philosopher, not a bigotted Person.

Scripture-proof of a Day of Judgment justified by Reason.

Sebast. By your Favour, it is not to impose upon you to give you divine Authority for Proof. If, indeed, I should urge you only with the Opinions of Men, you might complain I did you wrong; for in such a Case your Denial would have as much Authority as their Assertion: But I hope God may be believed upon his own Word, especially in a Business of this Nature, which depends so much upon the Determination of his Will: For who can tell God's Mind better than himself. *Who knows the Mind of Man, but the Spirit of a Man which is in him?* And who can pretend to declare what God will do, unless he be pleased to reveal his Intentions? But if he declare he will judge the World, we may be sure it shall be done.

Bioph. Ay, but that is the Question, *Sebastian*. How shall I be assured that God hath any such Intentions, or hath made any such Declaration?

Sebast. That which we call by the Name of Holy

Scripture, is nothing elſe but a Collection of ſuch Declarations of the Mind of the divine Majeſty, as he hath thought fit, from time to time, to make to the Sons of Men. And thoſe Books which are ſo called, have been reverenced by wiſe Men in all Ages upon that Account, as ſuch: All imaginable Care hath been taken to preſerve them from Corruption or Depravation; and ſeveral of the beſt of Men have expoſed their Lives, rather than conſent to the Deſtruction of them. Now, why ſhould you call in Queſtion the Authority of theſe Books, which you cannot do without impeaching the Wiſdom of the moſt able, and the Sincerity of the moſt honeſt of Men; and upon the ſame Terms you derogate from the Faith of all Mankind, and muſt (if you will be impartial) abrogate the Credit of all the old Records in the World. Foraſmuch as (beſides all other Conſiderations) theſe ſacred Records, I mean the Books of the Old and New Teſtament, do bear an irrefragable Teſtimony to each other; and, as a Pair of Indentures, juſtify one another. Which you will eaſily be convinced of, if you conſider, that theſe two Volumes were written in ſeveral very remote Ages, and conſequently by Perſons that could hold no Correſpondence one with another; and were in the Cuſtody of thoſe that were of ſuch contrary Intereſts and Opinions, that it was impoſſible they either would or could conſpire together to put a Cheat upon the World in them. Now if, notwithſtanding, theſe two Books (in the Circumſtances aforeſaid) ſhall verifie one another, ſo as that whatſoever the Old Teſtament promiſes, the New Teſtament performs; what the one foretold, the other repreſents the Accompliſhment of; what Ground is, or can there be, to ſuſpect the Truth of them? For if ſeveral Witneſſes, and thoſe of ſeveral Countries, and of contrary

trary Intereſts, ſuch as never ſaw the Faces of one another before, and therefore neither would nor could combine together and contrive their Story, and eſpecially being examined apart too, ſhall notwithſtanding jump in the ſame Matter of Fact, and Circumſtances alſo, there is no Man ſo humourſome, and abounding in his own Senſe, but will allow their Evidence to be good and ſubſtantial; then much more is there very good Ground to believe thoſe Books which have all theſe Advantages, and ſeveral other which I will not inſiſt upon.

Bioph. Theſe are pretty things which you ſay; but this is not that kind of Proof I expected from you. If this be all the Satisfaction you can give me, I am where I was.

Sebaſt. No, *Biophilus*, this is not all I have to ſay; but I thought fit to remonſtrate to you the Sufficiency of this kind of Proof in itſelf, which Men of your Way are apt to make ſo ſlight of; and thence to convince you, that thoſe Men that take up with this alone, are not ſuch ſoft and credulous People, as you are wont to repreſent them.

It is juſt Prudence to prepare for a Day of Judgment, tho' the Evidence were leſs than it is.

But what if I had no other Proof but this, I do not find that you are able to reply any thing to it; it is an eaſier thing to hough at an Argument, than to anſwer it. Beſides, if this Way of Probation were far leſs conſiderable than it is, yet you know that any Evidence will ſerve againſt none; and the meaneſt Arguments will carry a Cauſe when there is nothing to be ſaid on the other ſide. If you could but pretend to prove, on your part, that there were no ſuch thing as a Judgment to come, you had then ſome Reaſon to be ſtrict in your Demands of Proof from me, of what I aſſert: But in a true Balance the leaſt Grain or Moment in the World will caſt the Scale when

there is nothing againſt it. Now, ſince you know well enough, you can offer no kind of Proof of an Aſſertion contrary to this we have before us, nothing in the Earth but over-wiſe Doubts, grave Suſpicions, and perhaps it may not be ſo; I appeal to your impartial Reaſon, whether it be not more fit to ſuſpect (at leaſt) that it is ſo, where there is ſome Proof of it, than to ſuſpect it is not ſo where no Argument is given for the Negative; nay, indeed, where none can be given.

Negatives, you know, are hard to prove in general; but eſpecially in ſuch a Caſe as this is: For he that undertakes to prove ſuch a Negative, hath but one of theſe two Ways to do it, *viz.* Either he muſt affirm, that he hath ſurveyed the whole State of Nature, and ſeen all the Cauſes that are in working; and then muſt aſſert *de facto*, that there is no ſuch thing upon the Loom as that he denies: And alſo that he perfectly underſtands the whole Mind and Will of God, and that he intends no ſuch thing; or elſe he muſt demonſtrate by Reaſon, that it is plainly impoſſible, and a flat Contradiction, that any ſuch thing ſhould be. Either of which you cannot, without intolerable Abſurdity, affirm in the preſent Caſe.

So that, as I ſaid, you have nothing but bare Suſpicions on your ſide, (whatever Arguments I have on mine.) Now, beſides the unequal Balance of nothing againſt ſomething, be it never ſo ſmall, do but conſider what ſtrange Imprudence it is to adventure ſo great a Stake, as all your Intereſt in another World amounts to, upon a mere *Non putáram*. For, what if ſuch a thing ſhould happen to prove true at laſt, what will become of you then, what a ſad Condition are you caſt into?

Wiſe Men are wont to value, not only Certainties, but alſo Probabilities, and even Contingencies alſo. Now, ſeeing it is not impoſſible but

ſuch

ſuch a thing may be, and it is of infinite Conſequence if it ſhould be, there is all the Wiſdom in the *World* to be provided for it. You will ſay, it may not be: But that is all, that *Infidelity* it ſelf can enable you to ſay: And then ſure it is far ſafer to ſuppoſe that it may be, for no hurt can come of that; but the danger is unſpeakable on the other ſide, if it ſhould prove to be true. In a word, in ſuch a Caſe as this is, it is a wiſe Man's part rather to believe upon ſlight evidence, than to diſ-believe upon great Preſumptions.

Bioph. I am beholden to you for the friendly Caution you give me: But it is your Reaſons I expect at this time, and not your Advice.

Sebaſt. Thoſe you ſhall have preſently; and do not think I trifle with you, or decline the proof I promis'd, becauſe I proceed thus gradually and ſlowly with you: The true Reaſon whereof is, becauſe I would rather your own Prudence ſhould incline you to believe, than that my Arguments ſhould preſs you to it; and I much more deſire that you ſhould be ſafe, than that I ſhould have the *Glory* of a *Victory*. It is only *your Concern* that we go upon; have therefore a little Patience, that we may rightly underſtand one another, and ſince you have refus'd Scripture-proof, give me leave to ask you particularly, what kind of *proof* you expect of this Matter under *our Conſideration*.

What kind of proof, and what meaſure of Evidence is to be expected in the principles of Religion.

In this firſt place, I hope you do not require ſenſible Evidence of a Day of Judgment. You were ſaying even now, that no Man had ſeen Heaven, and therefore you did not believe it. Poſſibly, thoſe Words ſlipped from you unadviſedly. However, it is (you know) a thing future which we are now debating about; and *ſenſible Proof* cannot be requir'd of that, without

flat *Contradiction*. It is as if a Man ſhould deſire to ſee that which confeſſedly is not to be ſeen; and that a thing ſhould be that is not, or be and not be at the ſame time. You know you cannot have ſenſible evidence to Day, that the Sun will riſe to Morrow: In ſhort, neither of any thing paſt, nor future; but only of that which is preſent.

There are ſome Men in this Age, and perhaps you may be acquainted with them, who will only appeal to their Senſes; and accordingly they reject the Notion of God, and of Spirits, merely becauſe they can ſee no ſuch things. Now if I thought this were your Opinion I muſt go another way to work than I intended: But if it will content you that I make the Point ſeem reaſonable and clear to the Eyes of your Mind, tho' I do not gratifie your bodily Eyes with a ſtrange Proſpect, then I will proceed as I deſign'd.

Bioph. Well, we are agreed for that. I did, I confeſs, ſpeak of ſeeing Heaven, but there was no contradiction in that; becauſe if there be any ſuch Place, it is ſuppoſed to be conſtantly exiſtent, and therefore may be viſible: Yet I do not expect to ſee the Judgment, till the time comes; becauſe Futures are not to be ſeen, but fore-ſeen. Go on therefore, and give me rational Evidence, and it ſhall ſuffice.

Sebaſt. But there is another thing I deſire to be reſolv'd of: namely, What Meaſure or Degree of rational Evidence you will be ſatisfied with? The reaſon of my Enquiry is this: Some Men there are, who highly pretend to a readineſs to believe upon juſt Grounds; but when it comes to Trial, they are humourſome and captious; they will require ſuch Evidence as the nature of the Thing cannot admit of, (even ſuppoſing it to be true;) they expect ſuch Proof as ſhall leave no room for Cavil

and

and Exception, ſuch as a Man can find no Evaſion from, but that will extort an Aſſent from him, whether he will or no. Now I muſt tell you, this is very hard and unreaſonable in any Caſe whatſoever; for, as much as the Wit of Man is fitter to pull down, than to build up; and it is the eaſieſt thing in the World to find Shifts and Cavils; inſomuch that he muſt believe very little indeed, that will admit of nothing which ſome ſlight Objection or other may be made againſt. *God* himſelf hath provided no Remedy for Contumacy; and ſuch Men muſt go on, and periſh without Cure; for no Argument can eſcape a captious Humour.

Beſides, if ſuch ſtrict Demands of Satisfaction were at any time allowable, yet can they by no means be reaſonably inſiſted upon in ſuch a Caſe as this; for if ſuch irreſiſtible Evidence, were to be had in this Matter, there would be no room for Virtue; it would then be a neceſſary Action to believe, and no inſtance of Choice, nor any argument of a virtuous Mind: For what can be the Praiſe or Rewardableneſs of doing that *which* a Man cannot chuſe but do? Or, what Excellency is there in Faith, when there is no Pretence in the World for Unbelief?

Therefore all that you can juſtly and wiſely expect in the preſent Caſe, is, That there be ſufficient Ground given you for a diſcreet Choice; and over-weight enough in one Scale to incline the Judgment of a prudent Man ſo far, that he ſhall ſee it is more reaſonable that he believe, than that he do not. This is very properly to be eſteem'd Conviction of our Reaſon, this is the juſt Standard of Prudence, and this is the Principle that wiſe Men govern themſelves by in weighty Affairs. And, indeed, if no Man ſhould determine himſelf to the purſuit of a buſineſs, until there were

were no Objection, no Excuſe, Colour, or Pretence to the contrary, all the nobleſt Projections, and moſt profitable and neceſſary Undertaking of Mankind, would be nipped and blaſted in the Bud.

Bioph. In truth, I do not ſee but your Demand is reaſonable; and I muſt yield to you in this particular alſo.

Sebaſt. Then I ask no more.

In order to the Satisfaction of a Man's Judgment, he muſt firſt come to Indifferency.

Phil. Yes, *Sebaſtian*, let me put you in mind of one thing more; which is, that *Biophilus* will promiſe you to hold the Scales even; otherwiſe, an *overweight* in either of them will not be diſcernible. My meaning is, that he agree to be ſincerely indifferent; and willing to believe on the one ſide, as well as on the other: For I have found by my own Experience, that whilſt a Man retains a partial Fondneſs for an *Opinion*, it is not all the Arguments in the *World* ſhall beat him out of it; he will ſee all that which makes for him as through a *Magnifying-Glaſs*, and ſo think it great and conſiderable; and contrarywiſe, all that which is againſt him ſhall ſeem little and deſpicable. But when a Man comes to this paſs, that he is content one ſide ſhould be true as well as the other, then (and not till then) the beſt Reaſon will carry it. Therefore unleſs you premiſe this, you will ſtrive againſt the Stream, and diſpute in vain.

Sebaſt. Thank you heartily for that, *Philander*. It is very true, *Biophilus*, that if you oppoſe Reſolution and Prejudice againſt the Diſcourſe I am to make to you, that will be *Armour* of *Proof* againſt all the Arguments that can be brought; and then we had as good ſtay here, as go farther and loſe our Labour.

But

But why, good *Biophilus*, ſhould you not lie as far towards the Doctrine which I am aſſerting, as towards the contrary? Nay, why ſhould you not look upon it as greatly your Intereſt, that there ſhould be another World, and a Judgment at the end of this? It is certain, you and all of us muſt die, there is no peradventure in that; and it were a moſt ſad and diſmal thing to think of it, if Death put an utter end to a Man, ſo that all his Comforts, and all his Hopes expire with him. And I wonder, in my Heart, how any Man can think of Death with any Meaſure of *Patience* upon thoſe Terms; and that it doth not make him ſullen and melancholy all the Days of his Life. You will ſay, he muſt yield to Neceſſity: But that is a Remedy worſe than the Diſeaſe, (if it be poſſible) to ſeek a Cure for Death in Deſperation. To tell me there is a Neceſſity of dying, is only to tell me there is no help in the caſe; which is the very thing I complain of.

It is greatly a Man's Intereſt that Religion ſhould be true.

And this Conſideration is ſo much the more ſharp and cutting, by how much the more Man's Life hath been pleaſant and comfortable. As for a Man that hath all his Life-time been oppreſſed with Calamities, pinch'd with Poverty, cover'd with Obloquy, or afflicted with horrible Pains, *&c.* it may ſeem eaſie to him to die, that ſo he might have that Reſt in the Grave, which he could not have above Ground; and tho' he thinks he ſhall be ſenſible of no Comfort there, yet he ſhall fare as well as other Men in that State. But for him that hath had good Treatment in the *World*, pleaſant *Accommodation*, tempting Fortunes and Enjoyments; for ſuch a Man to think of Death, which will ſpoil him of all his Ornaments, and level him with the Duſt; that will interrupt all his Delights,

lights, put an end to all his Deſigns and Projections, and draw a dark Veil over all his Glories: I ſay, if ſuch a Man hath nothing to comfort him againſt Death, if there be no Life after this, but a Man muſt for ever forſake, and be forſaken of all his Felicities, I cannot ſee how he can poſſibly avoid an unſpeakable Abhorrence of it, nay, that's not all neither; for, methinks it ſhould render all his preſent Enjoyments, not only inſipid and loathſome, but even a very *Torment* to him, whilſt he is in the midſt of them.

Now, why ſhould any Man reſiſt the only Remedy in this Caſe, the only Conſolatory againſt the Sum of all Calamities; which is, the Hopes of another Life? Why ſhould he be willing to die as the Beaſt dies, and to abandon himſelf to the Grave, to Rottenneſs, and Oblivion? It were certainly better never to have been born, than both to live in perpetual fear of dying, and being dead, to be as if a Man had never liv'd: Better never to have taſted the Sweets of Life, than to be only tantaliz'd; and by that time he begins to live, to begin to die; and then be eternally deprived of what he juſt had a Smack and a Sight of.

Nay, farther yet; if a Man had lived only like a Beaſt, it had been no great matter to die like a Beaſt: If, I ſay, a Man look'd no farther than his Fodder, had no Senſe of any thing but Eating and Drinking, and had a Soul in him that ſerved only for Salt to keep the Body from Putrefaction, ſo that he never look'd about him, made no Improvement of himſelf, and had no Deſigns in his Head, it were leſs matter if he return'd to the Earth, which (like a Mole) he did nothing but root in and turn over, whilſt he was upon it. But for a Man of an active Soul, of improv'd Parts, of *Reaſon*, and *Wiſdom*, and *Uſefulneſs*, to be ſmother'd in the Grave; ſo that all his Notions

and

and Diſcoveries, all his Arts and Sciences; nay, all his Virtues and gallantry of Mind, all his Hopes and Deſigns ſhall be abruptly broken off and bury'd in Oblivion; this is ſo ſad and diſmal a thing, that it is able to diſcourage all Study and Induſtry, all Care and Culture of a Man's Life: For, why ſhould I ſtrive to live like a Man, if I muſt die like a Beaſt? Why ſhould I take pains to know, when *by increaſing Knowledge, I ſhould but increaſe my Sorrow?* Foraſmuch as the more I know, the more I ſhall feel my ſelf miſerable; and, indeed, become guilty of my own Torment. So that if there were no Hopes after this preſent Life, it would be a more adviſable Courſe for a Man to abandon himſelf to the moſt dark and ſqualid Barbariſm, rather than to weary and wear out himſelf in the Queſt of Knowledge; and better never to apply himſelf to any Study, or to beſtow any Pains or Coſt upon himſelf; nay, indeed, if it were poſſible, it were deſirable never to know any thing, or to think at all. For, why ſhould a Man put a Cheat upon himſelf? Why ſhould he take, not only *unprofitable*, but *vexatious* Pains? In a word, why ſhould he not ſo live, as he muſt die? To all which add, that if there were indeed no other *World*, nor Life hereafter, and if there be any Man that can find in his Heart to be fond of living upon thoſe Terms, he muſt of neceſſity be a pitiable Slave whilſt he continues here: The perpetual Fears of Death cramping him, and keeping him in continual Bondage, that he ſhall not have the Spirit or Courage to dare to do any brave Action; but contrariwiſe, he will be unavoidably tempted to be a wretched Coward, and baſe Fellow; and become a ſordid Paraſite, to flatter and humour every Body, merely upon the account of Self-preſervation.

Why

Why therefore ſhould any Man be fond of ſuch an uncomfortable, nay, ſuch a ſottiſh and debaſing Opinion? Why ſhould not a Man chuſe rather to erect his own Mind, and be willing to hope well of himſelf, by cheriſhing an Expectation that he may ſurvive his Body, and live eternally?

Bioph. There is no Queſtion, *Sebaſtian*, but that living for ever is very deſirable, if a Man could hope for ſuch a thing abſolutely, and not clogged with Conditions. As for Death itſelf, that would have no great matter of Formidableneſs in it, if it be either (as I ſuppoſe it) a perfect Interciſion of all Senſe; or, much leſs, if it were (as the Men of your Perſuaſion uſe to ſpeak) only a dark Paſſage to another Light. But the Miſchief is, that upon your Hypotheſis a Judgment muſt paſs upon a Man firſt, before he can arrive at that other Life. Now that is the terrible thing; if I were rid of the Danger of that, it would (as you ſay well) be my Intereſt to believe all the reſt, in ſpight of all Objections to the contrary.

Sebaſt. I do not deſign to impoſe upon you; for it is very true, there is no Paſſage into the other World, without undergoing a Teſt or Trial, whether we be fit for eternal Life, or no. And it is moſt certain alſo, that if a Man die an impious, a baſe and wicked Perſon, it were better for him that either he had not been born, or elſe that the Grave and Oblivion might cover him to all Eternity. But what need this fright any Man whilſt he is alive, and may provide himſelf accordingly? Eſpecially ſince the Grace of God puts it in our Choice and Power to be good, and ſo qualify'd, that we may be out of all Danger of miſcarrying in the Judgment.

For, *Biophilus*, Can it be thought that God Almighty ſhould ſeek the Ruin of his Creatures? Or that he can have any Deſign upon them, to make

make them eternally miſerable? If he had, there would not be the Solemnities of a Day of Judgment; for he would not need to inſnare us in Forms of Law, but might, without more ado, have deſtroyed us when he pleaſed; and who could reſiſt him, or diſpute the Caſe with him? Undoubtedly, he is too great a Majeſty to have any little Ends to ſerve; and therefore we can ſuſpect no Hurt from him; and there could be nothing but the Overflowings of his own Goodneſs, that provoked him to make us at the firſt; and therefore there can be nothing of Envy, Malignity, or Cruelty in any of his Counſels and Deſigns about us.

And that all theſe are not mere Sayings, or ſanguine Conjectures of mine, but real Truth (beſides all other Ways of Probation) you may be aſſured by this Conſideration; that in all God's Demands from us, as the Terms and Conditions of our Happineſs; or (which is all one in all the Duties he requires at our Hands, and in all the Obligations of Religion, there is nothing ſevere and diſcouraging, nothing extremely harſh and difficult, much leſs impoſſible. Nay, in truth, if things be rightly conſidered, I believe there will be nothing to be found in any Inſtitution of Religion that ever was heard of in the World, that could go ſo much againſt the Grain with Men, as to tempt them to run the Hazard of dying eternally, rather than to comply with it. And if any ſuch were to be found, it were Ground enough to aſſure us, that ſuch Inſtitutions proceeded not from God: For ſuch is his Wiſdom and Benignity, that he can impoſe nothing as a ſevere Task-Maſter, purely to abridge our Liberty, or to break our Spirits and oppreſs our Powers; but only to raiſe and improve us according to our utmoſt Capacities, and as neceſſary Methods to train us up as Candidates for eternal Life.

I will not deny but there are ſome Reſtraints put upon

upon us, and ſome Difficulties we muſt expect to encounter; otherwiſe Religion would have no Excellency in it, nor could we have either the Glory or the Pleaſure in obtaining our End and Happineſs, if it were won without Sweat and Labour. But I do confidently aſſert, that theſe Difficulties (whatever they are) we ſhall find juſt Reaſon to undergo with all Chearfulneſs, if we do but compare what Religion promiſes with what it commands or impoſes. And as for the Chriſtian Religion in particular, all this which I have ſaid is ſo remarkably true of that, that if any thing hath been repreſented as a Branch and neceſſary Duty thereof, which is of a contrary Nature to what I have now ſuppoſed; I do not doubt, with great Eaſe, to make it appear, that ſuch Suggeſtion is either a palpable Miſtake, or a notorious Scandal. Why then, I ſay, ſhould a Man think either ſo ill of God, or of himſelf, as to be afraid or unwilling to fall into his Hands? You cannot forebode any Evil from him, if you are ſatisfied that he is perfect and happy, full and glorious, juſt and good; and therefore you muſt condemn your ſelf of prodigious Folly in not complying with reaſonable and equitable Laws, and of being wilfully acceſſary to your own Calamity, if you dare not undergo his Judgment. So that upon the whole Matter, there can be no Reaſon, why you ſhould be unwilling to believe there is ſuch a thing: And that is all I deſire of you at preſent, and I heartily conjure you to be true to your ſelf herein.

Bioph. Well I am reſolved to be as indifferent as it is poſſible to be: Now therefore prove it.

The moral Demonſtration of a Judgment to come.

Sebaſt. That I will do with all poſſible Plainneſs and Sincerity; namely, I will make good that there is a ſufficient Reaſon to incline a prudent Man to expect and believe, that,

hat, after this Life, God Almighty will call Men o account, and judge them according to their for-ner Actions and Behaviour.

Now you know it is the Nature of moral Ar-guments, not to depend upon one ſingle Evidence, ut to conſiſt of the united Force of ſeveral Con-iderations. Accordingly, my preſent Proof of a udgment to come (as aforeſaid) muſt compriſe heſe three Particulars.

Firſt, I will ſhew, that the Nature and Condi-ion of Mankind is ſuch, as to render him fit and apable to come to an Account, and to undergo uch a Judgment as we ſpeak of.

Secondly, That it is very agreeable to the Nature nd Attributes of God (according to thoſe Notions which we have of him) that he ſhould call Man-kind to ſuch an Account, and judge them.

Thirdly, That God Almighty actually exerciſes nd diſplays ſuch a Providence in this preſent World, s gives earneſt before hand, that he really intends o judge it hereafter.

Theſe three things make way for, and ſucceed ach other naturally; and all together, amount to full Proof of the Point in Hand. Wherefore, when I have opened and made them out ſeverally, n the Order I have laid them down, I will leave t to you to collect the Reſult of them.

Firſt, I ſay, the Nature and Condition of Man-kind is ſuch, as renders him capa-ble of undergoing a Judgment n another World; and there-ore it is reaſonable that he ex-pect it accordingly. This will ap-pear by the Inſtances following.

Mankind is of ſuch a Nature, and endued with ſuch Powers, as make it reaſonable for him to expect Judgment.

In the firſt Place, it is notorious, that Mankind s endued with a large and comprehenſive Mind, which is not confin'd to the mere Objects of his enſes, and things preſent before him; but hath a

vaſt Scope and Proſpect, by means of which, he ſurveys the Univerſe, embraces the whole World and takes within his Verge, as well things paſt and things to come as thoſe that are preſent; which no other Creature is capable of but himſelf. The Beaſt hath no kind of Notice of, or Concern for what was in former Time, nor no Solicitude about what may come after; but only applies itſelf to the preſent Exigences or Conveniences of the Body. But Man is very curious and inquiſitive into Hiſtory, and how things paſſed of old long before he was born; and is alſo very thoughtful and anxious what may befal hereafter, when he ſhall be dead and gone. Now, this one Conſideration alone makes him look, as if he were a Being that were concerned in the whole Frame of Nature, and in all the Revolutions of Providence, and, at leaſt, of more Conſequence than to be a mere Pageant for the ſhort time of this Life: Or a Muſhroom to ſhoot out of the Earth, and return to it again, and ſo be as if it had never been.

Beſides, we may obſerve, that the Mind of Man doth not only conſider the abſolute Nature of things as they lie ſingly and ſeverally before it; but compares them together, and eſtimates their relative Natures, the mutual Reſpects that they have to each other, and the various Aſpects and Influences they have upon each other, and ſo comparing and conferring things together, raiſes Obſervations, makes Inferences, deduces Concluſions, frames general Maxims; thereby brings things into Order and Method, and raiſes Arts and Sciences. All, or any of which things no Creature below himſelf makes any Pretence to, or gives any Token of. From whence we may conclude, not only the Pre-eminence of Nature, but that he is ordained to higher Purpoſes.

Moreover

Moreover, Mankind is endowed with Liberty of Choice, and Freedom of Will; by Virtue of which, he doth not only move himself by his own internal Principles, and vital Energy; but also can determine himself to this Object, or that; and either presume or desist the Prosecution at his own Pleasure. Insomuch that he is neither carried by the Swing of any superior Causes, nor fatally allured by the powerful Charms of any Objects from without; no, nor by the Efficacy of any Arguments arising therefrom; nor any Impression whatsoever (saving that of God Almighty) can overbear or supersede his own Resolution, but that he can act or desist, suspend Prosecution, or pursue his own Choice; and apply himself to this Object, or that; and follow this Argument and Motive, or the other: He hath such an Helm within himself, that he can sail against Wind and Tide; he can move himself in a Calm, and stay himself in a Storm: In a Word, he can move which way, when, and how far he will; and stop his own Career when he pleases. The Truth of this we find by daily Experience; and we commonly please our selves too much in this Prerogative of our Natures. We see that which is better, and follow that which we know to be worse: We hear Arguments, and reject them; because we will do so, we are perswaded to the contrary, and yet go on; and when and whatsoever we act, we find at the same time we could have done quite contrary if we had pleased. Other Creatures either act merely as they are acted by superior Causes, drawn by invisible Wires, or fatally inclined by the Objects and Motives before them: But we are put into the Hand of our own Counsels, and wholly govern'd by our selves, as to our inward Resolutions and Determinations. Now this, as it is a mighty Discrimination of our Natures from theirs, so it hath this peculiar Effect,

that it renders a Man's Actions properly his own and imputable to himſelf, and nothing elſe; and conſequently fits him to undergo a Judgment for them.

But farther yet: To make Mankind more capable of a Judgment, he hath a directive Rule, or Law of Reaſon within him, whereby to govern himſelf, both in his Elections and Proſecutions; that is, he acts not only freely and undeterminately in Reſpect of any Cauſe without himſelf; but he hath a Light within, to guide and direct thoſe free Powers of his, that they may not run riot, and move extravagantly; by the means of which he is enabled both to make choice, of his Deſigns, and to ſelect fit and proper Methods of accompliſhing them. For, as he is not ſtaked down to ſome one particular Buſineſs, (as generally other Creatures are) but hath great Scope to expatiate in, and Variety to pleaſe himſelf withal; ſo he hath a Card and Compaſs given him to ſail by in that vaſt Ocean which lies before him: That is, he hath a Faculty of diſcerning the Difference of things, and conſequently can judge what is worthy to be propounded as his Poſt and Deſign, and alſo to meaſure and adjuſt the means thereunto; which renders him more fit to give an Account, both of his Elections and Proſecutions.

Nay, farther yet, humane Nature, by the Advantage of this Light within him, hath not only a Capacity of apprehending and judging of natural Good and Evil, or ſuch things as are only pleaſant and profitable, or the contrary; but hath also Notions of higher Good and Evil, which we commonly call moral; that is, he finds himſelf obliged to have regard to ſomething elſe beſides, and better than his Body; namely, either to the Deity, or to the Community of Mankind; or, at leaſt to his own better Part, his Soul and Mind. No-

*

of which are at all conſider'd by any Creatures below Man: And there is hardly any Part of Mankind, (at leaſt, that deſerve to be ſo eſteem'd) which doth not think itſelf concern'd in all theſe. For we ſee, whoſoever hath any thing of a Man in him, doth think ſome Actions to become, or not become him reſpectively, merely as he is a Man, which would admit of no difference, but be all alike in a Beaſt. Whereupon it is, that a Man cannot diſpenſe with himſelf in the doing of ſeveral things which are in his Power to do; no, not in the Dark, and the greateſt Privacy; becauſe every Man that in any meaſure underſtands himſelf, hath a Reverence of himſelf; and the Effect of this betrays itſelf in that quick Senſe which Mankind hath peculiarly of Shame and Honour: Which argues him to be accountable to ſomething higher than his Senſes.

Above all this, it is conſiderable, that Mankind has not only a ſpeculative apprehenſion of moral Good and Evil, but a practical and very quick and pungent Senſe of it, which we call Conſcience; by which he not only remembers and calls to mind whatſoever hath paſs'd him, but reflecting alſo upon the Ends and Circumſtances of his own Actions, and comparing what he hath done, both for Matter and Manner, either with the Rule of Reaſon within him, or ſome other Law, he cenſures and judges himſelf accordingly: If he hath done well and virtuouſly; that is, hath approved himſelf to himſelf, he then applauds and comforts himſelf, and feels an unſpeakable Satisfaction in his own Mind. As for Example, If a Man hath behav'd himſelf gallantly towards his Prince and Country; if he hath carried himſelf ingenuouſly and gratefully towards his Friends, his Patrons, or Benefactors; if he hath been beneficent to any part of Mankind; if he hath demonſtrated love to

God, or Goodneſs, and good Men; if he have reſtrain'd his own Rage and Paſſions; if he have reſcued an Innocent from the Hand of the Oppreſſor, or done any thing of like nature, the Heart of every Man naturally, in ſuch a Caſe, feels ſuch an inward Delight as ſweetens his Spirits, and chears his very Countenance. On the contrary, if he have been falſe, treacherous and ingrateful; if he have been cruel and oppreſſive, or have ſaid or done any baſe thing, he is preſently upbraided, accuſed, condemned and tormented by himſelf. Now, what is all this but *Præjudicium*, a kind of Anticipation of the Judgment to come?

But if any Man ſhall pretend this thing call'd *Conſcience*, which we now ſpeak of, to be no natural Endowment of *Humanity*, but only the Effect of Cuſtom and Education; ſuch a Perſon may eaſily undeceive himſelf, if he will but conſider, that all this which I have ſpoken of *Conſcience*, both as to the Matter and Form of it, (or *Syntereſis* and *Syneideſis*, as learned Men are wont to diſtinguiſh) is ſo univerſal to all Mankind, (at leaſt, that have not done Violence to themſelves) that it can with no Colour be imputed to Education, but muſt be reſolv'd into the very Nature and Senſe of the *Soul*. And moreover, a different *Notion* and *Apprehenſion* of the *fore-mention'd* Particulars is ſo deeply implanted in the Minds of Men, that it is impoſſible any contrary Cuſtom or Education ſhould abſolutely and totally efface it; therefore it is the Senſe of Nature, and conſequently a Preſage of the Divine Judgment.

To all which add in the laſt place, that the Mind of Man ſeems plainly to be above the Body and independent of it; foraſmuch as we ſee, that not only our Reaſon, and the Powers of our Souls are ſo far from decaying with the Body, that contrariwiſe, they grow more ſtrong and vigorous by

thoſe

hoſe very Cauſes which impair the Body; I mean, y Age, Exerciſe and Experience. Beſides, it is ſily obſervable, that our Souls do, as often as ey pleaſe, act quite contrary to the Intereſts and nclinations of our Bodies, and frequently controul he Paſſions thereof, as well as correct and over-ule the Verdict of our Senſes: Therefore it is not t all probable that they ſhould periſh with our odies, but ſurvive to ſome farther Purpoſes; e-pecially if we take in what I intimated before, amely, the Conſideration of the Shortneſs of the ime of this Life; which is ſo very inconſiderable or ſo excellent a Being as the Soul to diſplay itſelf n, that it ſeems unworthy of all the aforeſaid erfections, and more unworthy of the Contrivance f that Wiſdom which made us, to order it ſo; nleſs it be, that Mankind is placed here only in a tate of Probation, and is to be try'd hereafter, in rder to a more laſting Subſiſtence and Duration. Which, in conſideration of all the Premiſſes, he annot but be thought capable of; at leaſt, if there e a Judge as fit to judge him, as he is fit to un-ergo a Judgment. Which brings me to my ſe-ond Branch.

Bioph. Hold a little, I pray, good *Sebaſtian:* You have ſpoken many things well and worthily, of the Pre-eminence of humane Nature; and ſome of them ſuch as are not only ſufficient to erect a Man's Spirits, and to provoke him to hope well of himſelf; but alſo do render it in ſome ſort probable, that we are deſigned for ſome higher Uſes than we commonly apply our ſelves to. Nevertheleſs, you have not reached your Point, nor will all you have ſaid attain the End you propounded, unleſs you go farther, and prove the Soul of Man to be a Spirit, or Immaterial Subſtance, (as the Men of your *Way* are wont to ſpeak,) that ſo there may be a plain Foundation

for its Exiſtence out of the Body. Without which, let it be as excellent a Being as it can, and adorned with as many other Perfections as you can imagine, it cannot be capable of ſtanding at a Tribunal, and undergoing ſuch a Judgment in another World as we are ſpeaking of.

Sebaſt. I could have wiſhed you would have given me leave to lay all the Parts of my Argument together before you, that ſo you might have taken a view of it entire, and all at once; and then you might have objected as you ſhould have ſeen Cauſe. But however, I will comply with your Method: And as to that which you have thought fit now to interpoſe, I anſwer theſe two Things.

Firſt, I ſay, it is not neceſſary to the Buſineſs in hand, that the Soul be proved to be ſtrictly immaterial, and capable of exiſting and acting out of the Body; foraſmuch as at the Day of Judgment I ſuppoſe the Body ſhall be raiſed again: And then, if it ſhould be ſo, that all the Powers of the Soul were laid aſleep by Death, until that time; yet now, upon a Re-union with their proper Organs, they would revive again. So that I did not, in my Proof, fall ſhort of the Mark I aim'd at; but you out-ſhoot the Point in your Demand: For, whether the Soul be a Spiritual Subſtance or no, ſo long as thoſe Perfections which we have enumerated belong to it, there is nothing wanting to make it capable of undergoing a Judgment. But,

Secondly, To ſpeak my own Mind plainly, and to come home to your Satisfaction, I muſt tell you, that as for my part, I do not doubt but that the Soul of Man is, properly and ſtrictly, a ſpiritual Natural; ſo I am confident that thoſe Things which we have aſcrib'd to it, do ſufficiently prove it to be ſo; ſeeing it is

The Soul of Man prov'd to be immaterial.

is impoſſible to ſalve thoſe *Phænomena*, or to give any tolerable Account of thoſe great *Accompliſhments* and Performances of the Soul before ſpecified from mere Matter, let it be modified or circumſtantiated how it can.

Simple Perception of Objects is of the loweſt Rank of human Perfections; and, indeed, is not proper to human Nature, but common to Brutes; yet this ſeems impoſſible to be perform'd by mere Matter. For the Eye, tho' it be a very admirable and exquiſite Organ, can by no means be ſaid to perceive the Objects of Sight, but only to tranſmit or preſent them to ſome perceptive Power: It doth, I ſay, only as a Glaſs, repreſent the Species or Image of the Thing; which even a dead Eye, or an Hole, will in ſome meaſure perform; but it makes no Judgment of the Object at all, as appears by this, that all Objects are tranſmitted, reverſed, or with the Heels upward, through the Eye, and ſo left, till ſome higher Powers ſet them right, and on their Legs, and judges of their Diſtance, and other Circumſtances.

Now, if it be ſo, that Matter thus advantagiouſly diſpoſed and improved, as in the admirable Structure of the Eye, cannot perform that one Act of ſimple Perception, what ſhall become of all thoſe nobler Actions of the Soul? And into what ſhall they be reſolved? Such as Self-motion, the ſtrange Celerity of Thought, Memory of that which is paſt, Prudence and Fore-caſt for that which is to come, and a thouſand other ſtrange Operations. Is it imaginable that mere Matter ſhould underſtand, argue, diſpute, conſider and confer the Relation of one thing to another; and thence infer Conſequences, and make Concluſions? Is it likely that mere Body and Quantity ſhould be ſenſible of Shame and Honour: nay, be conſcientious too, and accuſe, condemn and torture itſelf; or which

which is moſt wonderful of all, check, controul, deny, limit and mortify itſelf? He that will undertake to ſhew how all theſe things may be performed by Atoms and Motion only, is a ſubtle Mechaniſt indeed; and I do not doubt but, at the ſame rate, ſuch a Man may be able to make a new World when he pleaſes, with the ſame Atoms or Materials. For it is evident there is more Intricacy in this little World of Man, than in the whole Fabrick of Heaven and Earth beſides.

Wherefore, if Matter or Body cannot perform the aforeſaid Operations, then the Soul of Man which doth perform them, muſt be acknowledged to be a ſpiritual Subſtance.

Bioph. In troth, you talk very ſhrewdly; but for my Life I cannot underſtand what you mean by this thing which you call Spirit; and therefore I reject the Notion as Gibberiſh and Nonſenſe.

Sebaſt. Softly, good *Biophilus*: What Reaſon is there for that haſty Concluſion? Muſt we needs deny every ſuch thing to be, as is hard to underſtand? Muſt we, like dull Boys, tear out the Leſſon that is difficult to learn? Is nothing true but what is eaſy; nor poſſible but what is facile? But beſides, let me tell you, upon ſecond Thoughts, there is not more Difficulty in underſtanding the Nature of Spirits, than there is in conceiving how all the aforeſaid Operations ſhould be performed with them; no, nor half ſo much neither: So that nothing is gotten by the Objection; for it is a very vain thing to object Difficulty, when at the ſame time you are forced to acknowledge the thing to be neceſſary. But why, I pray you; what is the Cauſe that ſpiritual Subſtance is not as intelligible as corporeal?

Bioph. O Sir, there is a vaſt Difference in the Caſe: I can ſee and feel the latter, but ſo I cannot the former.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. Nay, believe me, there you are out: You ſee and feel only the Accidents of a bodily Subſtance, but not the Subſtance itſelf, no more than you ſee or feel a Spirit.

Bioph. Pardon me, at leaſt, I ſee and feel the bodily Subſtance by the Accidents; that is, I am aſſured of its Preſence and Exiſtence, and I can affirm ſuch things of it upon that Teſtimony of my Senſes.

Sebaſt. And you may affirm as much of a Soul, (if you pleaſe) tho' you can neither ſee nor feel it; foraſmuch as you plainly perceive the Properties and Operations of it.

Bioph. That is cloſe, and to the Purpoſe, I confeſs; but ſtill I cannot tell what to make of this thing called Spirit, for I can frame no Image of it in my Imagination, as I can do of other things.

Sebaſt. Why there it is now, I perceive now, *Biophilus*, you have a Deſire to ſee with your Mouth, and hear with your Eyes. For, as reaſonably every jot may you expect to do either of thoſe, as to frame a ſenſible Imagination of a Spirit. That which we call Imagination, (you know) is nothing elſe but the Impreſs of the Colour, Bigneſs or ſome other Accidents (of a thing that hath been preſented to our Senſes) retained in, and (it may be) a little diverſified by our Fancy. But now, if a Spirit have no Colour nor Bulk, nor ſuch other Accidents to be repreſented to our Fancy, through our outward Senſes, how is it poſſible you ſhould have any Image of it there? No, no; ſpiritual Beings are only capable of affording us an intellectual Idea; namely, our higher Faculty of Reaſon, from Obſervation of their Effects and Operations, concludes their Eſſence, and takes an Eſtimate of their Nature: And, indeed, it is a flat Contradiction to require any other Evidence of that kind of Beings.

Bioph.

Bioph. This kind of Diſcourſe is very ſubtle, and I cannot tell what to object farther to it: Go on therefore to your ſecond Branch; perhaps there I may better cope with you.

Sebaſt. The ſecond Step which I take towards the Proof of a Judgment to come, is, that as on the one ſide, Mankind appears to be fit and capable of being judged hereafter; ſo on the other Hand, it is agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of God, and to thoſe Notions we have of a Deity, that he ſhould call the World to ſuch an Account. And this appears briefly thus:

The natural Notions Men have of God, render it reaſonable to expect that he will judge the World.

The moſt common and moſt natural Notion which Men have of the divine Majeſty, is, that he is a Being abſolutely perfect; that is, (amongſt other Accompliſhments) that he is a moſt powerful, wiſe, juſt and good Being: There is hardly any Body that thinks of a God, but conſiders him under theſe Attributes and Perfections; and he that diveſts him of any of theſe Perfections, renders him neither an Object of Fear, nor of Love, and conſequently not a God: Inſomuch that were it not for politick Ends, namely, to avoid Infamy, or other Puniſhment, amongſt Men, doubtleſs thoſe that deny to him any of theſe Attributes, had as good flatly deny him to have any Being at all.

Now, if theſe things be included in the natural Notion of God, they not only capacitate him to be a Judge of the World, if he pleaſes; but give great Aſſurance that he will do it. For, if he be a wiſe Being, he cannot but ſee how things go; and particularly how his Creatures carry themſelves here below. If he be powerful he hath it in his Hand to rectify thoſe Diſorders he obſerves amongſt them; and both to puniſh the Evil, and to reward the

the Good. And if he be good and juſt, it cannot but be expected from him, that he will ſet things to rights one time or other, when his Wiſdom ſhall think fit. But it is evident, this is not done exactly and anſwerably to thoſe Attributes of his, in this World; therefore there is no Reaſon to doubt, but he will aſſuredly do it in another World: And therefore the Scripture tells us, *He hath appointed a Day wherein he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs*, &c.

Bioph. Not too faſt, good *Sebaſtian*. I know not certainly what Apprehenſions other Men may have; but for my part, tho' I do acknowledge a God, (and that not only politically, as you ſuſpect, but upon the Principles of Reaſon) yet I muſt profeſs to you, I do not think the natural Notion of God includes thoſe Attributes you ſpeak of. Why may there not be a God, and he only a neceſſary Agent? And then there is no Danger of an After-reckoning with him.

Sebaſt. Ah, *Biophilus*, I am heartily ſorry to find ſo unworthy a Notion of God ſtill to find any Room in your Thoughts, (tho' it were but in Suſpicion only.) It is very certain indeed, that if he be only a neceſſary Agent, then all Fear of a Judgment is diſcharged; and as certain, that all Religion can then be nothing elſe but a groundleſs Superſtition at the beſt. For, then God muſt needs be a very tame Deity, which Men may play withal, and abuſe at Pleaſure; as the Frogs did by their wooden King in the Fable.

God not a neceſſary Agent.

But then, in the Name of Goodneſs, what need is there of any God at all, if a neceſſary Agent will ſerve the turn; Why can we not as well ſuppoſe the World to be eternal, as make ſuch a contemptible Being as a neceſſary Agent is, to be eternal, only to give Beginning to the World?

Or

Or rather, why if we attribute one Perfection, *i. e.* Eternity, to him, why not all the reſt, which ſeem to be inſeparable from it! Foraſmuch as it is not imaginable how the firſt Cauſe ſhould be the meaneſt of all; and he that gave thoſe other Perfections to other things ſhould be deſtitute of them himſelf.

Or, how can we believe that ſuch a fetter'd impotent, unthinking, and unwiſe Being ſhould make a World in that Beauty and Perfection which this World conſiſts of? Or at leaſt, how is it poſſible, that a natural or neceſſary Agent (which is like a Gally-Slave chained down to his Bench and confin'd to his Task and Subject) ſhould make a World with ſuch Curioſity and Diverſity of things, yet with that exquiſite Order and Harmony which we obſerve in Nature?

Do you think that the Frame of things could not poſſibly have been any otherwiſe than they are? Can you fanſie that nothing could have been better nor worſe than it is now? If you ſee any Footſteps of Wiſdom or Choice, any Poſſibility that any thing ſhould have been otherwiſe than it is, you forego your neceſſary Agent.

Do you not ſee great and manifeſt Inſtances of Deſign and Contrivance in the Order of things, *viz.* one thing fitted to another, and one ſubordinate to another, and all together conſpiring to ſome publick End and Uſe? Now, ſure a neceſſary Agent could not guide things ſo, becauſe it hath no Ends or Deſigns of its own.

Again, if God be a neceſſary Agent I would fain be reſolved how it came to paſs that we are not ſo too? I think you granted me even now, that we chuſe our own Way, propound Ends to our ſelves and voluntarily purſue them, when we could (if we pleaſed) as freely chuſe and act contrary; and this we juſtly glory in, as the Perfection of our Nature.

ture. Now how to conceive that I ſhould be a free Agent, and that he who made me ſo ſhould be a neceſſary one; that is, that the Effect ſhould be more excellent than the Cauſe, neither I, nor (as I ſuſpect) any Body elſe can underſtand.

But I need not in this Place induſtriouſly ſet my ſelf to confute this odd Conceit of God's being only a neceſſary Agent, becauſe in my third Branch, I ſhall fundamentally undermine it, and (as I think) leave neither Colour nor Pretence for it; and therefore with your Leave, I now haſten to that.

Bioph. Go on then, in God's Name.

Sebaſt. My third and laſt Point for the Proof of a Judgment to come is this; God doth actually exerciſe ſuch a Providence in and over the World for the preſent, as gives great Aſſurance that he will judge it hereafter: For theſe are, as it were, the two ſeveral Ends of the ſame Chain; a Providence here and a Judgment hereafter: They do naturally and mutually draw on each other. If there be a Judgment to come, there muſt be a provident Eye over the World for the preſent, in order to it; that is, God muſt ſo mind the World, that he perfectly underſtand how things go, how Men carry themſelves, what there is amiſs amongſt them, what requires Puniſhment, and what deſerves a Reward; otherwiſe he cannot be ſaid to judge, foraſmuch as, without this, it might rather be ſaid, there is a Day of Execution coming, than a Day of Judgment. And on the other ſide, if there be a Providence in this World, and it be true that God obſerves how Men carry themſelves towards him, it muſt ſpeak his Intention to reward and puniſh hereafter, in proportion to ſuch Obſervation; for otherwiſe that Providence would be fruitleſs, and

There is an Actual Providence in this World: Therefore there will be a Judgment in the next.

to

to no purpoſe; it would be a mere matter of vain Curioſity, and a needleſs Trouble to the divine Majeſty, as the *Epicureans* objected. But now, that God doth exerciſe ſuch a Providence in this World, as from whence we may reaſonably preſage a Judgment to come, I think will abundantly appear by theſe three things.

1. There hath been ſuch a thing as we call Prophecy or Prediction of things before they come to paſs; which cannot be without a Providence.

2. There have been Miracles; which could not be without the divine Interpoſition.

3. There are frequent (tho' not altogether miraculous) Inſtances in all Ages, of a divine Preſence in, and Influence upon the Affairs of the World.

1. Firſt, I ground the Aſſertion of a Providence in this preſent World upon the Prophecies and Predictions of things before hand, which have been verified by real Effects in their reſpective Times and Seaſons. It is evident, that whoſoever is able certainly to foretel things before they are, muſt ſee through all the Series of Cauſes which produce ſuch Events; eſpecially, if he define alſo the preciſe Time, and other Circumſtances of the Accompliſhment; but above all, whoſoever ſhall declare before hand, not only what ſhall come to paſs according to the Courſe of natural and neceſſary Cauſes, but alſo ſuch things as are caſual and contingent, or ſubject to the Choice and Indifferency of free and voluntary Agents, muſt have a mighty Reach with him, and make a very curious and accurate Inſpection into the Conjunctions and Conſpiracy of all things, as well as into their particular Natures, Tendencies, and Inclinations: For as every Effect muſt have its Cauſes before it can be,

Prophecy, a certain Argument of a Providence in the World.

be, ſo the Prediction of ſuch Effect muſt depend upon a certain Knowledge of thoſe reſpective Cauſes which are pregnant of it. Therefore if there ever hath been ſuch a thing as Prophecy there is a Providence.

Now for the matter of Fact; or, that there have been certain and punctual Predictions of things long before they came to paſs, is the conſtant Belief of all Nations; and he that denies it, muſt give the Lye to the greateſt and beſt Part of Mankind. You may remember that *Tully* purſues this Argument in his Books *de Divinatione*; and he there gives too many and too remarkable Inſtances of it, to be denied or eluded: But I ſhall chuſe to ſet before you only two Paſſages out of the Holy Scripture to this purpoſe. For, tho' I perceive you have not ſuch a Reverence for thoſe Books as they deſerve, yet ſuch palpable Matters of Fact as I ſhall inſtance in, and which were of ſo publick a Concern, and general Notice, as whereupon the Revolution of whole Nations depended, can afford no Ground for calling in Queſtion the hiſtorical Truth of them. And let me tell you, I make choice of theſe Inſtances out of thoſe Writings, for no other Cauſe but for the Notoriety of the Fact, and the Eaſineſs of Confutation, if it had been otherwiſe than true.

The former of the two Paſſages is the Prediction of the Slavery of the Children of *Iſrael* in the Land of *Ægypt*, and their miraculous Deliverance thence, above four hundred Years before it came to paſs; and the Accompliſhment (when the Time came) anſwering the Prediction preciſely to a very Day, ſo as to be obſerved by the whole Body of the People; and the Remembrance of it perpetuated by an Anniverſary Solemnity ever after: As you may ſee, *Exod.* xii. 41.

The other Inſtance is, the *Babyloniſh* Captivity,

which was foretold above ſeventy Years before it came to paſs; and that in a Time of the greateſt unlikelyhood that any ſuch Calamity ſhould befall; namely, it was propheſied of when the *Jews* were in the greateſt Peace and Proſperity. And then for the Term of this Captivity, that was foretold to laſt ſeventy Years, neither more or leſs. And both theſe Periods (as well as other Circumſtances) were exactly, and to Admiration, hit in the Event of Things.

Now in both theſe Inſtances, the Things were propheſied of ſo long before hand, there were ſo many Obſtacles in the Way of their Accompliſhment, and ſo much of the Will of Man alſo intereſted in both the Caſes; and yet notwithſtanding ſuch punctual Exactneſs is to be ſeen in the Event, that it is plainly impoſſible that humane Wit ſhould ſo much as gueſs probably at them; therefore the Predictions muſt be grounded upon divine Intimation: And then God is ſo far from being a neceſſary Agent, that it is apparent he minds the World and looks narrowly into all the Parts of it, from one End to another, and governs and manages inferior Cauſes.

Miracles neceſſarily argue a Providence.

2. My ſecond Proof of an actual Providence in this World, is, from Miracles. By a Miracle I mean any thing coming to paſs, which is, either for the Matter or Manner of it, above the Power of natural Cauſes, or at leaſt contrary to their eſtabliſhed Courſe and Order; whether it be effected by heightening them above their ordinary Pitch, or accelerating their Motion, or by ſuddenly bringing thoſe Cauſes together which lay at a diſtance; or whether it be by depreſſing, ſuſpending, or ſuperſeding any of them.

And I reaſon thus: If any thing have ever been brought to paſs above the Capacity, or out of the Method

Method of the natural and common Cauſes, then here is an active Deity which exerts his Power in that Caſe. Or if ever the Courſe of Nature hath been interrupted, it muſt be by the Interpoſition of the ſupreme Cauſe. For it is neither intelligible that Nature ſhould go out of Courſe of itſelf, without its own Decay and Failure; nor poſſible that being once ſo out of Courſe, it ſhould ever be able to recover itſelf into its former Order, without the Help of Omnipotency. Therefore if ever there have been a Miracle in the World, there is Proof of a Providence.

Now that ſuch extraordinary things as we here ſuppoſe have happen'd, cannot be doubted without great Ignorance, or denied without Impudence. I know there is a ſort of witty Men (in their way) who endeavour to put a Slight upon Miracles, and therefore are very captious and critical in ſuch Caſes as this; but if they can elude ſome Occurrences that have been believed or pretended miraculous, yet they will never be able to evade them all. And if there have been but one acknowledg'd Miracle in all the Time of this World, it will be ſufficient to prove a Providence. They will, perhaps, impute ſome Cures that have been ſaid to be done by Miracle, to the Efficacy of ſome Medicine; altho' they can neither tell us what that ſpecifick Remedy was, nor much leſs tell us how the Symptoms ſhould ſo ſuddenly ceaſe upon the Uſe of it. It may be they will tell you in the general, (with Confidence enough) that the ſtrange things done in *Ægypt*, and in the Wilderneſs, were effected by the ſudden Application of Actives to Paſſives; but cannot ſo much as pretend to ſatisfy any Man, how ſuch remote Cauſes were brought together, and exalted to ſuch an extraordinary Degree of Efficacy, as to produce ſuch admirable Effects on the ſudden as thoſe Cauſes import.

Or if they could ſpeak tolerable Senſe in ſome of thoſe Particulars, yet what natural Account can be given of the raiſing of the dead, or of unlearned Men's ſpeaking all kind of Languages in an Inſtant? What natural Cauſe will they aſſign of the Sun's ſtanding ſtill in *Joſhua*'s time? Or of that preter-natural Eclipſe at our Saviour's Paſſion? What could intercept the Sun's Light, when the two Luminaries were in Oppoſition; or what reſtored it to its Motion again, when it was interrupted, as in the former Inſtance? Or to its Light again, when it intermitted, as in the latter Inſtance? To endeavour to give natural Accounts of theſe things, will prove as abſurd and ridiculous to Reaſon, as to deny the matter of Fact is void of Faith and Religion.

But if any of theſe Inſtances will not paſs with ſuch Men becauſe they were over long before our Time, or becauſe the Truth of them depends upon the Authority of Scripture, there are other innumerable Paſſages in all Ages, not liable to that Exception, that cannot be reſolved into any Cauſe leſs than a ſupreme and omnipotent. Amongſt which what will they ſay to this, which happens almoſt every Year; namely, that after a long wet Seaſon, it ſhall ſuddenly clear up and be fair Weather again; and contrarywiſe, after a long dry Seaſon, it ſhall unexpectedly be wet and rainy? Whereas, if they look only to natural Cauſes, the quite contrary muſt happen: Foraſmuch as the more Rain hath been at any Time, the more may be ſtill, becauſe there are the more Vapours from whence Clouds are raiſed: And the longer a dry Seaſon hath laſted, there is every Day the leſs Reaſon to expect Rain; becauſe there want Vapours out of which it ſhould be raiſed. Now to impute this ſudden and admirable Change only to the Winds, is to beg the Queſtion; for it is well enough known

that the Winds depend upon Vapour, as well as Rain. And to aſcribe it to the Stars, is to confeſs an humourſome Reſolution, that, right or wrong, we will ſhut God out of the World. But this leads me to my

3. Third Proof of a preſent Providence, *viz.* From the more frequent and ordinary Inſtances of a divine Influence upon the Affairs of the World. The Effects of which, tho they are not accounted miraculous, becauſe they are common, yet they give ſufficient Indication of divine Adminiſtration. And of this kind there are ſo many which offer themſelves to an obſervant Mind, that to ſeek Flaws, and go about to make ſpecious Objections againſt ſome few of them, will be rather an Argument of reſolved unwillingneſs to believe, than of any juſt Grounds of Infidelity. For, like as in a great Cable, made up of ſeveral ſmaller Cords, if perchance ſome of the Threads ſhould flaw or break, yet the Remainder will be able to bear the Streſs of whatſoever Uſe it ſhall be put to.

More ordinary Inſtances of a Providence in the World.

Now under this Head I reckon, in the firſt place, as very obſervable, that there is ſcarcely any great thing ever brought about in the World, which God may not be ſeen to have an Hand in: And that may be collected generally from the Inadequateneſs of the viſible means to moſt notable Productions. As when great Preparations are defeated or laid aſide, and mean and inconſiderable ones do the Buſineſs. This is that which *Solomon* obſerved long ago, *That the Battle is not to the ſtrong, nor the Race to the ſwift, nor Bread to Men of Underſtanding:* And we cannot want an Example for it nearer Hand, when we remember the Reſtauration of K. *Charles* II. For it pleaſed God to deal in that particular, as he did by *Gideon*'s Army, when he diſmiſſed the great-

eſt Part of the Forces, and did his Buſineſs with a few, and thoſe very unlikely for ſuch an Atchievment.

But more admirable than this is the Preſervation of the holy Scripture in all Ages; both from total Abolition by the Flames of Perſecution; and from Corruption by the capricious Fancies of ſuch Men as would neither ſincerely believe it, nor abſolutely reject it. Such alſo is the Preſervation of the chriſtian Religion, when all the Wit, and all the Power of the World combined together againſt it: And ſuch was the Succeſs of the Apoſtles in propagating that Religion, and planting the chriſtian Church; when a few Fiſhermen leaven'd the World with a Doctrine quite againſt the Grain of it, and naked Truth prevailed againſt Authority, Art and Intereſt, in Conjunction.

Hitherto alſo I reduce the Maintenance of Magiſtracy and civil Government: And I look upon it as a ſtanding Evidence of a Providence, that the ſtrong Bands of wicked and refractory Men ſhould ſtand in awe of a ſingle Man, like themſelves, only becauſe he is inveſted with Authority. This, if it be duly conſider'd, is very ſtrange, and can be reſolved into nothing but a Providence. Nor is it leſs ſtrange, that, conſidering the great Number of evil Men, their Secrecy and Cloſeneſs, their Cunning and Falſhood, their Envy and Neceſſity, their Activity and Selfiſhneſs, they ſhould be able to do no more Hurt in the World than they do. Why do they not aſſaſſinate whom they pleaſe? Or what is the Reaſon that they do not forſwear Men out of their Lives and Fortunes, and act whatſoever their Revenge, or Covetouſneſs, or Luſt ſhall prompt them to? And no Account can be given of this, but the powerful Reſtraint of Providence.

Moreover, there are remarkable Examples in all Ages of evil Men, dogged by their own Guilt

nd tortured by their own Conſciences, when as o Body elſe either accuſed or hurt them. And n the other ſide, as frequent Inſtances of virtuous Men, who have been very comfortable under great Difficulties, and whoſe Spirits have been born up with an admirable Bravery under ſuch Preſſures as would ordinarily cruſh and ſink other Men: And his, altho' the Perſons thus carrying themſelves, were otherwiſe of no remarkable Strength or Courage. Neither of which Paſſages can be reſolved nto any other Cauſes than the mighty Influence of Providence.

Nay, farther: It is very obſervable how ſtrangely ſometimes ſecret Sins are brought to Light, eſpecially ſuch as Murther and Treachery, and where ll Arts and Advantages were made uſe of for Concealment; ſuch Perſons becoming their own Accuſers, when no Body elſe could do it for them; nd not unuſually their own Executioners too.

Above all theſe, there are ſome Inſtances of Vengeance befalling very flagitious Men ſo ſignally, and with ſuch pat and ſignificant Circumſtances, that (without any Uncharitableneſs) we may be led by he Suffering to the Sin; as in the famous Caſe of *Adonibezek*, *Judg.* i. 7. whoſe barbarous Uſage of hreeſcore and ten Kings, cutting off their Thumbs nd great Toes, and making them, like Dogs, gaher their Meat under his Table, was repaid upon himſelf, in the ſame Severity. Of kind to which are thoſe panick Fears and Shiverings, that oftentimes attend blood-guilty Men, as long as they ive: And tho' they may have eſcaped Revenge rom the Hand of Men, yet this, as a *Cain*'s Mark ſet upon them by the Hand of God, indelibly ſticks by them, and follows them to their Graves.

It is needleſs to ſay any thing more on this Subject; foraſmuch as every Man that doth not wilfully ſhut his Eyes, may collect Inſtances to this

Purpoſe, both from the Government of the World in general, and from his own Fortunes in particular. For beſides the quiet Serenity and Comfortableneſs (in token of the divine Favour) which uſually attends a virtuous Courſe of Life; and the Anxiety, Torment, and Uneaſineſs, which as frequently (in Teſtimony of the divine Diſlike) attends a wicked and flagitious one; it is not a very unuſual, nor (to be ſure) an unpleaſant Sight, to behold the former crowned with ſignal Succeſs, and worldly Proſperity; and the latter puniſhed with Shame and Beggary. And this ſometimes ſhall happen in ſuch Circumſtances, when there is nothing to which this different Succeſs can be imputed, but merely divine Providence; foraſmuch as the latter ſhall otherwiſe be more cunning for the World, and every whit as induſtrious and frugal as the former: But divine Providence only makes the Diſcrimination, whilſt the one is under the Bleſſing of Heaven, and the other is apparently blaſted and curſed.

And now what think you, *Biophilus*, upon the whole Matter? Have I not acquitted myſelf in all the three things I propounded? And now, laying all theſe Things together, is not here ſufficient Evidence to determine a prudent Man in the Caſe, and to ſatisfie him that there is a Providence in this World; and conſequently, that there will be a Judgment hereafter.

Bioph. I cannot tell, *Sebaſtian*. I confeſs you have ſaid many very conſiderable Things; and ſome of them beyond what I could have expected in the Caſe. But I have one main Objection, which eſpecially touches the laſt Branch of your Argument; and which, if it ſtick by you, all you have ſaid will ſignify nothing; but if you come clearly off from it I ſhall not know what to think of the Buſineſs. It is this, in ſhort: I do not ſee any ſuch

ſettled

ſettled and conſtant Method in the Management of the Affairs of this World, as muſt neceſſarily argue a Providence. For, in particular, notwithſtanding all you have ſaid, it cannot be denied, that very often the beſt of Men are oppreſſed, and born down by ill Fortune; and contrarywiſe, evil Men are very happy and proſperous. Therefore it may ſeem that thoſe Inſtances which you collect in favour of your Opinion, may happen by Chance, rather than by the Diſpenſation of Providence: And then, if there be no Providence in this World, by your own Argument there can be no Judgment hereafter.

A Vindication of Divine Providence in the Obſcurity of ſome of its Diſpenſations in this Life.

Sebaſt. If that be all, or the main of what you have to object, I am in Hope to ſee ſome good Iſſue of this Conference: For in the firſt Place, you know, that which is impeached by this Objection, is but one ſingle Inſtance, out of many which I have brought for the Aſſertion of a Providence; and conſequently, if this ſhould fail, or if I ſhould yield you all that the Objection pretends to; yet ſo long as the others are unſhaken by it, that great Doctrine may ſtand firm notwithſtanding: For it is but as if you ſhould pick out one ſingle Stone out of an huge Building, or (as I ſaid before) find a Flaw in ſome one Thread of a great Cable; neither of which can weaken or endanger the one or the other. But then, beſides you cannot be ignorant that this which you now mention is an old, thread-bare Exception, worn out of all Faſhion by the old Atheiſts and *Epicureans*, and which hath been canvaſs'd and baffled over and over by Men of all Ages, and of ſeveral Perſuaſions; by *Job*, by *David*, by *Solomon:* Nay, by *Tully*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, and ſeveral others; that it is a great Argument of the Poverty of your Cauſe to be ſeen in it

it now-a-days, and may juſtly excuſe my Labour in confuting it. However, becauſe you think fit to give it countenance, I will briefly ſay theſe three things in the Caſe; *viz.*

Firſt, that ſome Meaſure of Intricacy or Obſcurity in the Diſpenſation of divine Providence, is no Argument againſt it, but for it.

Secondly, that there are very great Reaſons aſſignable, why it may pleaſe the divine Majeſty to proceed ſometimes indiſcriminately, and keep no conſtant viſible Method in the Diſtributions of Good and Evil in this preſent Life.

Thirdly, Yet, however this be ſometimes obſcure, there are at other times ſufficient and legible Inſtances of a diſtinguiſhing Providence.

Firſt, Some Meaſure of Intricacy in the Diſpenſations of divine Providence, is ſo far from being an Argument againſt it, that it is a great Argument for it. For, if we do not make God a mere neceſſary Agent, (which I hope I have ſatisfied you in) we muſt allow ſomething to his Prerogative and Sovereignty; and conſequently, grant that he may do ſome things, becauſe he will do ſo, and whereof he doth not make us acquainted with the Reaſons: And we may very well allow to his Wiſdom, to have a Reach beyond us, and to have other Meaſures to govern the World by, than we could have made for him. What! Shall we call God to Account of his Management? Shall he not govern the World at all, unleſs he order it juſt as we would have him? This is apparently ſo far from being reaſonable, that it would be much more ſo to conclude on the contrary; namely, that if there were no Depths in the divine Counſel which we could not fathom, no Mæanders in the Way of Providence which we could not trace, it would be very ſuſpicious whether there were any thing of Divinity in the whole Buſineſs. For if things

things were constantly managed one Way, without any Variation, we should be apt to think all was under the rigid Laws of a fatal Necessity. If, on the other side, there were no Rule to be observed, no Footsteps of any Method, then we should be tempted to think Chance ruled the World. But when we observe an Intermixture of these two, *viz.* that there is a Rule, though there be some Exceptions from it, then we have Reason to conclude, that all is under a powerful and a free Agent, who, if he be also infinitely wise, cannot but see Reason for several things, which we cannot apprehend.

Secondly, There are very great and weighty Reasons assignable, why, in this particular Instance of Providence, (namely, in the Distribution of Good and Evil in this World) the divine Majesty should not be obliged to gratify our Curiosity with a plain Account of his Proceedings, but make some Exceptions to his general Rule: Amongst which these following are considerable.

First, Because such a constant and visible Exercise of distributive Justice, as your Objection seems to require, would be such an irrefragable and palpable Evidence of a Providence, as would leave no room for the Discovery of Ingenuity, or a virtuous Disposition: It would deprive Men of the Liberty of their Choice, whether they would be atheistical, or devout and religious; and consequently, there would be no Excellency in Piety and Virtue. For (as I have said before, in a like Case) it would be no Argument of Love to God, or Goodness, that a Man took Care to serve and please God, if he constantly stood over us in a visible and undeniable Providence; so that every Offender were taken in every Fact, and presently led to Execution; and, on the other side, if every virtuous Action were forthwith rewarded and crowned. In short, it is not agreeable to the Mind of God,

to

to over-run the Freedom of our Choice, ſince he hath endowed us with it; nor to ſuperſede that diſtinctive Faculty of our Nature: For ſhould he do ſo, he would act contrary to himſelf, and to his own Glory, as well as to the Nature and Condition of Mankind.

Again, ſecondly, a chequered and diverſified Method of divine Providence, wherein there is an Intertexture of Proſperity and Adverſity in the Fortunes of virtuous Men, tends more to their Improvement, than a more regular and conſtant Providence would do. For, as a continued Courſe of Proſperity is too apt to tempt Men to be wanton and careleſs; ſo a perpetual Series of Adverſity would be as apt to ſink and depreſs their Spirits: But a middle Way of Interchange in their Condition, balances them on both ſides, and maintains them in a more even Temper and Converſation. And for this Reaſon it pleaſes the divine Wiſdom to make ſuch falſe Steps, as you are apt to imagine them to be.

To which add, in the third Place, that herein lies the very Secret of divine Wiſdom; and by this very Way he doth moſt effectually aſſure us of the Point in Queſtion, (namely, a Judgment to come) in that there is ſuch apparent Neceſſity of it. For if the divine Majeſty ſhould let the preſent World run at random, and interpoſe himſelf in no Caſe to check the Hurry, and puniſh the Diſorder, there would ſeem no Reaſon to expect Juſtice from him hereafter, who gave no Token of it all this while: And then, on the other ſide, if he interpoſed ſo frequently and conſtantly, as to leave no Irregularity unpuniſhed, nor any brave Action unrewarded, there would be no Buſineſs left, nor no need of a Day of Judgment. Whereas by affording us ſome plain Inſtances of his Diſcrimination in this World, we are ſatisfied that he minds how things go, and

is

is able to judge; and yet, by permitting ſeveral other things to run riot, and ſeemingly to be unanimadverted upon, he hath, as it were, cut out Work for a Day of Judgment. Thirdly, notwithſtanding all this, as I ſaid before, there are ſome ſufficient and undeniable Inſtances of a diſtinguiſhing Providence in this World. I have granted to you, that ſometimes the Ways of God are intricate and involved; and I have offered at ſome Reaſons of it, to which many others might have been added; and, amongſt the reſt, that by this means we might be kept humble and modeſt, and taught to admire and reverence God, rather than to judge or pronounce of him. For theſe, I ſay, and other Reaſons beſt known to infinite Wiſdom, he thinks fit ſometimes to loſe us in the Mæander of his Ways: Yet, I ſay, they are not always thus obſcure; but ſometimes he treads ſuch plain and direct Paths, that we may eaſily follow him. And of this I have ſet before you ſeveral Examples already, and whoſoever will diligently attend to it, may eaſily collect more: But I will not omit to put you in mind of one great ſtanding one, and (as far as is poſſible) beyond all Exception; and that was in the Hiſtory of the *Jewiſh* Nation, who were infallibly ſure to be happy, and moſt remarkably proſperous, ſo long as they ſtuck to the true God, and the Laws he had given them by *Moſes*; and as ſure to be ſignally miſerable and calamitous, whenſoever they apoſtatized from their God, or debauched their Religion. So that that People was placed as a Light upon a Mountain, and were an illuſtrious Inſtance to all the World, of that great Truth we are now diſcourſing of; and if there were no more Inſtances of this kind, that alone would be ſufficient for the Purpoſe.

Bioph. I muſt confeſs, if the Story be true there was a very ſtrange Fate attended that People.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. Fate! do you call it? What Colour or Pretence in the World is there for imputing thoſe admirable Revolutions to Fate? Could blind Fate make Diſtinction of Perſons and Actions, and apply itſelf in the Diſtribution of Good or Evil, in Proportion to Mens Deſerts or Miſcarriages? Do not diſparage your own Diſcretion ſo much, as to uſe the Word Fate in ſuch a Caſe: No; aſſure your ſelf, that was a ſignal Diſplay of divine Providence, and ſuch an one as you cannot expect or demand a greater.

Bioph. But if it were the Effect of Providence, as you will needs have it, I wonder how it comes to paſs that there is no ſuch thing now; or why all the reſt of Mankind was neglected by divine Providence, and only that People, and in that Age and Corner of the World, ſo carefully managed by it.

A viſible Providence over the Jews.

Sebaſt. O *Biophilus!* ask not God an Account of his Prerogative, nor, much leſs, preſcribe to him how he ſhould govern the World. What if he, pitying the dark State of the World then, did ſomething extraordinary to relieve and enlighten it? And what if, having once given ſuch abundant Proof of himſelf, he ſhall think that ſufficient to all after-Ages? Or, to ſay no more, what if it pleaſes him to make Faith, in ſome Reſpects, more difficult now, than it was then? Who ſhall expoſtulate the Matter with him, eſpecially ſince he hath not left us deſtitute of ſufficient Grounds to determine a prudent Man in the Caſe! Which is all I have pretended to aſſert all this while, and I think I have made it good at laſt, though with ſome Tediouſneſs of Diſcourſe, for which I beg your Pardon.

Phil. Dear *Sebaſtian*, do not ſlander our Judgments ſo much, as to ſuſpect we ſhould think any thing

thing tedious, that is ſo much to the Purpoſe. I thank you heartily for the Pains you have taken with us; for although (I thank God) I have long lived under a firm Perſuaſion, both of a Providence here, and a Judgment hereafter; yet I am greatly rejoyced to find all ſure under me, and when my Reaſon encourages my Devotion: And eſpecially I think my ſelf obliged to you, for the Satisfaction you have given my Neighbour. Is it not ſo, *Biophilus?*

Bioph. I tell you plainly, *Sebaſtian* hath ſtagger'd me; and I cannot tell what to ſay more for the preſent, but I will conſider farther of it at leiſure.

Phil. Ay, but do it quickly, good *Biophilus*, you ſceptical Gentlemen are apt to take too long Time to conſider of theſe Matters. You know, die we muſt, and that ſhortly too, ſo that we have not any long Time to conſider in. What an horrible ſurprize would it be, if whilſt we ſtand doubting and diſputing, we ſhould hear the Sound of the laſt Trump, and be ſummoned to that great Tribunal? When Death once arreſts us, there is no Bail will be taken; we muſt come to a ſtrict Account, and a-wait an irreverſible Doom. So that there is no dallying in this Matter.

If either of us had Intelligence that an Enemy were coming upon us, with Deſign to aſſault us, and take away our Life, although it were a Perſon of but ordinary Reputation that brought us the News, yet it would ſtartle us, and we ſhould not ſtand diſputing the Truth of the Relation, but preſently either prepare our ſelves to appeaſe him, or arm our ſelves to encounter him; and then, if no Enemy appeared, we could ſecurely expoſtulate the falſe Alarm afterwards. Or if there came a Report that the Sea had broken its Banks and overflowed the Plain whereon our Hou-

ſes ſtand; I aſſure my ſelf, that neither of us would ſtand gravely deliberating, whether it were poſſible or no; or cavilling about the Neglect of repairing the Banks; or leaſt of all, loſe ſo much time as whilſt we could ſend Meſſengers and expect their Return; but firſt get us up to the Mountains, and there at leiſure inform our ſelves of the Truth of all Circumſtances.

When *Noah*, for no leſs than one hundred and twenty Years together preached Repentance, and foretold a Flood coming to drown all the World, no queſtion but the generality of Men laughed at him, as a timorous, hypochondriacal Perſon; they could object how unuſual a thing it was to be talk'd of; a thing that no Man had ſeen, or had ever happened to the World before: They could diſcourſe philoſophically in the Caſe too, and repreſent it as a very abſurd thing to imagine, that the Water ſhould riſe above the Earth, and overflow the Tops of their ſtately Houſes; for (might they ſay) where ſhall there be Water enough to do it? From whence ſhould it come? Or how ſhould this Fellow have Notice of it, before all other Men? And perhaps they would conclude, that at worſt, they ſhould have Time to ſhift for themſelves, when they ſee it come in earneſt, and eſcape as well as others. Hereupon they ate, and drank, and feaſted, and made merry; and laugh'd at that preciſe Coxcomb, with his new Machine of an Ark: But *ſo* (ſaith our Saviour) *ſhall the coming of the Son of Man be.*

Alas, *Biophilus!* whilſt we dream, the Judgment ſlumbers not; whilſt we doubt and diſpute God is in earneſt; and the Time draws on apace, when *Chriſt Jeſus*, the Judge of the World ſhall come *in the Glory of his Father, and of all the holy Angels.* The Heavens ſhall then melt away, and the Earth be on fire, from one End of it to another:

her: The dead ſhall riſe out of their Graves, and make an huge Aſſembly: The Books of all Men's Actions ſhall be opened, and the Devil, together with every Man's own Conſcience, ſhall be the Accuſers. Then ſhall all thoſe that are conſcious o themſelves to have lived virtuouſly and holily, ook up with Joy and Comfort, to ſee their Savi-ur become their Judge; to find a Vindication rom all thoſe unjuſt Cenſures that have paſſed up-n them here below; to come to an End of their abours, a Reward of their Services, the Accom-liſhment of their Faith and Hopes. Lord! What oy will be in their Countenances! What Glory pon their Heads! How the Angels ſmile upon hem, and welcome them to their Journey's End, nd Heaven opens in an admirable Scene of Light nd Glory to receive them!

But, on the other ſide, all that are privy to them-lves to have lived wickedly, baſely, and unprofi-bly, ſhall look pale, and tremble, and *call upon e Rocks and Mountains to hide them from the Fate the Lamb that ſits upon the Throne*; for they all ſee all black and diſmal about them; no Tears ill move Pity, no Rhetorick will perſuade, no xcuſes will be admitted, no Appeal allowed, nor efuge to be found, nor Reprieve to be hoped r; but they ſhall hear that dreadful Sentence, *epart accurſed into everlaſting Fire, prepared for e Devil and his Angels*; and ſhall ſee Hell open r Mouth to receive them into unquenchable lames.

Bioph. I proteſt you ſpeak with ſuch feeling, *hilander*, that your Diſcourſe hath more Power pon me, than all the Arguments that ever I heard my Life: And I know not what is the Matter, t my Heart trembles; therefore let me once more reat you to adjourn the Remainder of this Diſ-

courſe till another Time, and in the mean while I'll conſider of it, as I promiſed you.

Phil. Ah, dear Neighbour! Do not prove like that unhappy *Felix* in the Scripture: Do not go about to elude what you cannot evade: No, put not off this Buſineſs a Moment longer. Now that it ſeems God hath touched your Heart, quench not his Holy Spirit; it may be, you will never be in ſuch a Temper again, if you loſe this Opportunity.

Bioph. I aſſure you, I like this Temper (as you call it) ſo well that I do not deſire to feel more of it, but if you are reſolved to go on to torment me, I pray do me the Favour firſt to anſwer me this Queſtion. If theſe things be ſo as you repreſent them, how comes it to paſs, that Men unconcerned about Religion, die as comfortably, many times as any others? The Reaſon of my Queſtion is this, becauſe you will pretend, that whilſt Men are well in Health, and ſwimming with the Tide of Proſperity, they may either artificially put off the Thoughts of theſe things, though they be true, or the Noiſe of Buſineſs, and the Careſſes of the Senſe, may obſcure all Apprehenſion of another World. But ſure, when Men find themſelves dying, and that there is but one Way with them, it ſhould be too late for them to flatter themſelves, or to admit of the Flatteries of others; then ſurely Prejudices ceaſe, and Men are at leiſure to think. The Glory of the World cannot dazzle their Eyes when it is leaving them, and they it. What then, I ſay, can be the Reaſon, if theſe things be true, (which you ſpeak ſo affectionately of) that there is not as remarkable a Difference in Men's Temper of Spirit when they come to die, as there ſeems to be in their Converſation

How it comes to paſs, that there is no greater Difference

verſation whilſt they are a- *in the laſt Act of Men's Lives.*
live?

Sebaſt. I apprehend your Queſtion very well, and the Reaſons of your asking it too. And for Anſwer to it, I pray tell what is the Reaſon that Men that love their Health and their Eſtates both very well, will nevertheleſs be Drunkards and Whoremaſters, and Gameſters; though they ſee by daily Experience that theſe are very ſure Methods to out them of both? You will tell me, I ſuppoſe, that they feed themſelves with abſurd and unreaſonable Hopes, which fool their Diſcretion; or that they are bewitched and beſotted with thoſe kind of Pleaſures, and ſo conſider nothing at all. Why, juſt ſo it is here: The things we ſpeak of are undoubtedly true, and the Miſcarriage in them is fatal; but Men are careleſs and incogitant, and ſlip into the Pit of Deſtruction before they are aware: They live merrily, becauſe they never think of any thing, and they die as ſottiſhly as they lived.

Again, There is another ſort of Men that are captious and conceited, who will chop Logick, as we ſay, with God Almighty; they will have not only their Reaſon ſatisfied, but their Curioſity alſo, or they will not believe; they muſt ſee a Spirit, and Heaven, and Hell, or one muſt come from the dead to tell them News out of the other World, or they will not be contented. Now God will not indulge this Humour of theirs, and they are reſolv'd to venture him; that is, they will be damned rather than forego it.

Beſides, There are others take a great deal of Pains to disbelieve: They will uſe all the Arts of Sophiſtry, all the Tricks and Evaſions of Wit, intrench and fortifie themſelves in their atheiſtical Conceits: In a Word, they will cheat their own Reaſon, outface their own Conſcience, and bring

upon themſelves a ſtupid Inſenſibility of all that is good and virtuous; and ſo in Concluſion they die quietly, and go ſilently into the bottomleſs Pit.

To all this you muſt conſider, that it is very probable that many of theſe Men may be very far from dying chearfully, though we are not able to obſerve their Agonies and Torments; for it may very well be, that when once they begin to conſider what a deſperate Condition they are in; the very Thoughts of that, together with their bodily Diſeaſe in Conjunction, preſently overwhelms their Spirits, and makes their Paſſage out of the World more compendious, but never the more comfortable.

But after all, you ſhall find ſome of the aforeſaid Perſons, when they come to die, ſadly bewail their Folly and Careleſſneſs of this kind: But where ever did you hear of an holy and virtuous Man, that ever repented of his Choice or Pains in Religion, or Care of his Soul, and Solicitude in Preparation for this Occaſion? 'Tis poſſible, indeed, ſuch a Man may expreſs no Tranſports, becauſe his Body is like other Men's, and the Strength of his Diſeaſe may infeeble his Spirits, and cloud his Reaſon, and ſo interrupt the Exerciſe of his Faith and Hope. And, on the other ſide, the prophane and irreligious Man, tho' perhaps (as you ſuppoſe) he cannot, or will not diſſemble at the Approach of Death, yet he may be ſottiſh and inſenſible, and then whatſoever Difference of State they are entering upon, there may be no diſcernible Difference in their Departure hence. And ſo, you ſee, your Queſtion will not ſerve to the Purpoſe you propounded it for.

Phil. Come, *Biophilus*, leave theſe ſceptical Artifices, theſe captious Queſtions; do not ſeek out Ways to muzzle your own Conſcience, or impoſe upon your Reaſon: A Judgment there will be, and

it is all the Wiſdom in the World to be prepared for it. It is in your Power, by the Grace of God, to order Matters ſo, that we ſhall rather hope and wiſh for it, than fear it? And what vaſt Odds is there between them two? You are ſenſible that it is only a Judgment following Death, that makes Death terrible, at leaſt, to our Minds and Underſtandings. Indeed it is poſſible our Bodies may be diſturbed at the Aſſaults of it; but mere Death can never ſhake our Minds, or diſcompoſe one Thought, if we are ſatisfied that all will be well after it. And what an happy and deſirable Condition were it, to be out of the Reach of that King of Terrors, to ſee Light through that dark Vault of the Grave, to outlive all a Man's Fears, and to live to his Hopes? What a ſtrange Alteration will that one thing make in a Man's Projections and Deſigns, in his Countenance, and in his Spirit, and in the whole Management of himſelf! For who can be afraid of any other Accident, that hath no Cauſe to fear Death? Who would be concerned about Riches, or be much diſcompoſed whether his temporal Affairs ſucceed well or ill, that is provided for Eternity? Who will ſtoop ſo low, as to lay any Streſs upon Fame and Reputation, that hath approved himſelf to God and his own Conſcience, and can ſtand the Shock of the great Trial at the Day of Judgment? He that is in a Condition not to fear Death, will have no Reaſon to fear Men, or Devils, or Spirits, or Solitude, or Darkneſs; but may be as bold as a Lion; and cannot probably be tempted, either to expreſs a mean Paſſion, or to do a baſe Action: To be ſure he will crouch to no Body, flatter and humour no Body; for no Body can hurt him: And ſo his Life is eaſy as well as comfortable, foraſmuch as

The wonderful Comfort and Advantages of being ſecured againſt a Day of Judgment.

he has no Body to pleaſe but God and his own Conſcience.

But as I was ſaying, this is to be prepared for. Salvation is not a Matter of Courſe, nor the Judgment a mere piece of State and Formality, but infinitely ſacred and ſolemn. The Judge is wiſe, and holy, and juſt; the Trial ſtrict and ſevere, the Doom irreverſible, the Miſery intolerable, if a Man miſcarry; as well as the Felicity unſpeakable, if he ſtand right at that Tribunal: And to all this, the critical Time draws on apace; we feel ourſelves daily dying, therefore it concerns us to do what is to be done out of Hand.

Bioph. I am convinced that it is the wiſeſt Courſe to provide for the Buſineſs you ſpeak of, if it could be done without too much trouble.

Phil. Ah, *Biophilus!* Can any Care be too great in ſuch a Concern? Can any thing ſeem troubleſome, that may at once ſecure us from all other Troubles? But the Trouble is not great neither; it is but being ſincerely and heartily religious, and all is done.

Bioph. That is ſoon ſaid, I confeſs; but not ſo ſoon done. Beſides, I am never the wiſer for ſuch a general Advice; for there are ſo many religions in the World, that it is hard to know which to truſt to. Some ſublime Religion to ſuch an height of Spirituality, (as they call it) that a Man cannot tell what to make of it: And again, ſome make no more of it, than honeſt Morality. Some dreſs it up ſo fine and gaudily, with ſo many Trappings and Ornaments, that it is hard to find what the naked Truth of the thing is: And others render it ſo plain and coarſe, that a Man is tempted to deſpiſe it. Some repreſent it ſo thin and ſubtle, that a Man's Reaſon can take no hold of it: And others propound

The different Repreſentations of Religion, a great Temptation to Scepticiſm.

ſo groſſly and abſurdly, that a Man had need have a good Stomach to it, or he could not digeſt it. Some make it a very eaſy thing, a Trick of Wit, a mere Notion, but the becoming of a Party, or a bare believing; nay, a peculiar Garb, an Hair-Shirt, or a Friar's Girdle, doth the Buſineſs: With others it is a Matter of infinite Difficulty, and hath ſo many nice and ſtrict Obſervations belonging to it, that they are able to diſcourage any Pretence to it. In a Word, it ſeems to me to be what the Painter pleaſes, foraſmuch as I ſee ſome deſcribe it out of the Pleaſantneſs of their own ſanguine Fancy, and others out of the black Humour of their hypochondriack Paſſions. So that upon the whole Matter, I think I had as good maintain my own Character, and with-hold my Aſſent till Men are better agreed amongſt themſelves upon the Point.

Sebaſt. God forbid, *Biophilus*; for that you cannot do, unleſs you will adventure to be damned; as certainly you muſt, if you be found to be of no Religion.

Bioph. Why, have you leſs Charity for Men of my Temper than for all the World beſides? Muſt a Sceptiſt be certainly damned if there be a Judgment?

Sebaſt. Far be it from me to be uncharitable towards any Men, if I could help them. But I muſt tell you, I have leſs Hope for that Man that hath no Faith at all than for him that hath a bad one: And it muſt be a very bad Religion indeed, that is no better than none. For tho' by Reaſon of the Variety of Perſuaſions, (which you take notice of) a Man may be fatally ſo miſled, as to periſh in a blind Devotion; yet certainly, he that is ſo fantaſtically wiſe, as to be of no Religion at all, cannot be ſaved. But what need is there of either of theſe? There are a great many falſe Religions it is

acknowledged; but there is a Truth too, and that not ſo hard to diſcern as you repreſent it, if a Man ſincerely apply himſelf to the Search of it.

Bioph. Now you have nick'd the Buſineſs, you think; as if every Countrey had not the true Religion, or every Man's own Perſuaſion were not the Truth; at leaſt, if they be allowed to be their own Judges.

Sebaſt. Good *Biophilus*, do not jeſt in theſe Matters. I know you are a witty Man; but do not turn the Edge of it againſt your own Soul. Come, I'll tell you a Religion, that all the World ſhall agree in; and my Soul for yours, you ſhall be ſafe if you will comply with it. Do not ſtare: It is no more but this; *Live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World.* Or, if you will have it in other Words; reſolve with your ſelf not to do that thing (whatever come of it) that you cannot anſwer to God, and your own Conſcience; and do every thing within your Power, that may approve and recommend you to both; and thenceforward fear not a Day of Judgment.

A ſure Religion.

Bioph. Now you ſpeak to the Purpoſe, indeed; that I muſt needs ſay is good Counſel, and ſuch as I think all the World is agreed in; therefore I thank you for it, and I will try to follow it.

Phil. God proſper your Reſolution, *Biophilus*. And now, *Sebaſtian*, that we are happily come to this Point, I pray give me leave to put *Biophilus*'s Queſtion a little more home to you. I thank God I am ſenſible of the great Day approaching, and make ſome Conſcience of being provided for it; but becauſe, I would not, for all the World, be miſtaken in my Meaſure, in a Buſineſs of that Moment, I crave the Aſſiſtance of your Judgment, how far that Care extends; and particularly what it compriſes. The Reaſon of my Solicitude here-

in (beſides the Conſequence of the thing itſelf) is becauſe I have heard it deliver'd, as a ſtanding Rule by ſome Men, that the only ſure Preparation is, that a Man live every Day as if it were the laſt he had to live. Which Doctrine hath often raiſed Scruples in my Mind, and I ſuſpect it may have had the like Effect upon others; and to tell you my Thoughts plainly, I look upon it as unpracticable and inconſiſtent with the common Affairs of Life: For, moſt certainly on that Day which I thought would be the laſt I ſhould live, I would not fail to diſmiſs all other Buſineſs whatſoever; I would ſcarce eat, or drink, or ſleep, but wholly apply my ſelf to Acts of Devotion. Now, if that Rule be true, Religion is a more anxious thing than I was aware of: And if it be not true, I pray make me underſtand what is the Truth in this Matter.

Scrupulous and fantaſtical Rules of Preparation for the Day of Judgment reproved.

Sebaſt. I do not know why you ſhould lay much Streſs upon my Judgment in ſuch a Caſe: But if you will have my Opinion, it is plainly this, that the Rule you ſpeak of is far more devout than judicious; for as you well obſerved, ſince God Almighty hath cloathed our Souls with Bodies, and placed us in a World of Buſineſs, it cannot be that he ſhould expect we ſhould, in the whole Courſe of our Lives, ſo ſingly and ſolely apply our ſelves to the Affairs of another World, as we ſhould think fit to do, juſt when we are going off the Stage, and ſolemnly preparing our ſelves for an immediate Appearance at God's Judgment-Seat. If therefore thoſe Men (you ſpeak of) had preſcribed, that we ſhould every Day think of the Day of Judgment, as not knowing how ſoon it may be upon us; or that we ſhould take care every Day to advance in our Proviſion for it, they had deliver'd a great and a neceſſary Truth: But when they

ſpeak as if they meant that we muſt do nothing any Day, but what we would do if we were ſure it were our laſt Day, they thwart the very Order of divine Providence in the Condition of Men, and the Conſtitution of the World; they condemn the Practice, and call in queſtion the State of the beſt of Men; they lay a Snare for the Conſcience of the weak and timorous; and in a Word, they obtrude an impracticable Notion, for the moſt concerning and neceſſary Truth.

But you are not to wonder or be troubled at it. For though there is generally more Defect of Devotion than of Knowledge in the World, yet there are ſome particular Men, wherein the former exceeds the latter; and ſuch Men pleaſe themſelves in a pretty Saying, without being able to judge of the Prudence of it; and whilſt they go about to awaken ſome ſecure and careleſs Perſons to a ſerious Senſe of their eternal Concern, are not aware that they afford Matter of everlaſting Scruple and Offence to thoſe that are truly and tenderly conſcientious.

It were eaſy to give you ſundry Inſtances of this ſuperfine high ſtrained Divinity; but there is one I will mention for its Affinity with that before us; *viz.* You ſhall find it dogmatically delivered by ſome ſeeming great Caſuiſts, that in certain and indiſputable Things, it is a Man's Duty to do that which is beſt of the kind; and in uncertain and controverted Caſes to take the ſurer ſide. Now if theſe things were laid down as prudential Advices only to direct a Man which Way to incline himſelf, they were very uſeful; but to make them expreſs Meaſures of Duty, is, to make more Laws than God hath made, and condemn more things for Sin than he condemns; and conſequently cannot chuſe but imbroil the Conſciences of Men. For ſuppoſe Prayer be better than ſecular Buſineſs,

then,

then, upon this Principle, I muſt turn *Euchite*, and ſpend all my Time in Devotion. Suppoſe there be fewer Temptations in a monaſtick Life than in common Converſation, then every one that is careful of his Soul muſt retire into a Cloyſter. If there be Difficulties attending Magiſtracy and publick Employment, then I muſt fold up my Hands, and do nothing but go into my Cell and pray God to amend the World, though I be called to the other. If bodily Exerciſes and Games have ſome Snares in them, I muſt allow my ſelf no Recreations. Nay, I ſhall be put endleſly and anxiouſly to diſpute, whether it be better to give a poor Man two Pence, or a Shilling, or five Shillings, *&c.* Whether I ſhall pray three times a Day, or ſeven times a Day; whether an Hour or two Hours. And indeed, every thing I go about will afford inextricable Difficulties upon theſe Principles.

But that by the Way only: As for the Buſineſs in hand, trouble your ſelf no farther than to live every Day well, and be ſure to do nothing you cannot anſwer; be always getting Ground, and growing better and better; as near as you can, do every Day ſomething that may turn to account another Day; and then comfortably await God's Time.

Phil. I thank you heartily, both for your direct Anſwer, and your Digreſſion: And I pray pardon me if I come a little cloſer to you yet. I know you live under a comfortable Proſpect of the Day of Judgment; and I am confident you neither would nor could enjoy that even Tranquillity, if you were not upon ſure Grounds. Now my Requeſt is, that you will be ſo free with me, as to make me acquainted with your whole Management of your ſelf: For though I have a Rule to walk by, yet for fear I ſhould miſapply it, and either through Superſtition and Scrupuloſity overgo it,

it, or by the Careleſſneſs of my own Heart fall ſhort of it, I ſhould be very glad to have an Example to interpret it to me.

Sebaſt. I clearly perceive you either love me too much, or know me not ſo well as I thought you did, in that you think of making me your Example. Alas! *Phil.* little do you think how many Follies and Infirmities I labour under; and as little, what Qualms and Dejections of Spirit I ſometimes feel within my ſelf.

Phil. I confeſs I do not know you ſo well, but that I deſire to know more of you: And though it be a great thing I ask of you, that you ſhould abſolutely unboſom your ſelf to me; yet you that have done me ſo much good already, I hope will not deny me this Advantage of your Converſation.

Sebaſt. Ah! dear *Phil.* you may command me any thing: But I tell you my Life hath too many Blots in it, for you to make a Copy of. In truth, ſuch a Precedent will endanger to make you too remiſs.

Phil. Now you diſcourage me more than ever, and make me ſuſpect that it is an harder thing to be ſaved than I imagined, ſince you find ſuch Difficulty in it.

Sebaſt. Good *Phil.* excuſe me from ſaying any thing of my ſelf; but (if it were not too tedious for this Time) I would give you the Hiſtory of an holy Friend of mine, which I had from his own Mouth, and that, I aſſure my ſelf will be of more uſe to you than what you ſeem ſo paſſionately to deſire.

Eulabes's Hiſtory of his own Life, and Preparations for Judgment.

Phil. Of whom do you mean?

Sebaſt. Of my dear Friend *Eulabes*, now with God; a Perſon of as great Sanctity of Life, and Comfortableneſs of Spirit, as Earth can eaſily admit of.

Phil.

Phil. I have heard much of the Fame of his Piety, but I never had the happineſs to know him. For God's ſake, let us have his Story, ſince you will not gratify me in my firſt Requeſt.

Sebaſt. I remember the time well when I made much the ſame Requeſt to him, which you have now done to me: And he, after he had for a good while modeſtly declined giving me Satisfaction herein, (by ſuch Excuſes as it is not neceſſary I ſhould now repeat, and I had replied to them as well as I could,) at length yielding to my Importunity, he began thus:

" Dear Friend *(quoth he)* though from the firſt " date of our Acquaintance, our Converſation " hath been ſo intimate, and my Breaſt hath been " ſo open to you, that I ſcarcely know any thing " by myſelf, that you have not been privy to; yet " becauſe you are pleaſed to entertain the Curio- " ſity to enquire farther after me, I will not ſtick " to tell you as well what happen'd to me before " the commencement of our Friendſhip, as alſo " ſuch things as (in regard they paſſed only be- " twixt God and my own Soul) may be unknown " to you, tho' they were tranſacted ſince.

" Know then *(ſaid he)* that about ſuch time as " I had out-grown the mere Follies and Infirmities " of my Youth, and began, together with the ad- " vance of my bodily Strength and Vigour, to " make alſo ſome eſſays of Underſtanding and Diſ- " cretion, I quickly found, that by the Spring- " Tide of my Blood, and the great encreaſe of " Bodily Spirits, ſeveral very impetuous Paſſions " and Inclinations boiled up in me, notwithſtand- " ing thoſe ſmall Efforts which my Reaſon (as " yet) could make to the contrary.

" This I then thought (and do ſtill) to be a caſe " common to other Men with myſelf; and ſince " I have conſider'd of it, I am apt to think that

" our

" our wiſe Creator ſo ordered the Matter, that
" theſe two Combatants, Senſe and Reaſon, ſhould
" grow up and enter the Liſts together; to the
" intent, that as Reaſon ſhould not be without its
" Antagoniſt, to hold it in play; ſo on the other
" ſide, thoſe bodily Powers ſhould not be left
" without a Guide, to conduct, controll and ma-
" nage them.

" However, hereupon bodily Inclinations grow-
" ing daily ſtronger and ſtronger, and my Reaſon
" and Conſcience not being yet foil'd or corrupt-
" ed, there aroſe a very ſtrong Conflict in me be-
" tween them, and that as yet of very doubtful
" Iſſue; foraſmuch as both being Parts of myſelf,
" I could not eaſily reſolve which Side to en-
" cline to.

" In the mean time, (as God would have it)
" calling to mind the Solemnity of my Baptiſm, I
" remember'd that then, when I was dedicated to
" *Chriſt*, and enter'd as a Candidate of eternal
" Life, I had renounc'd the Fleſh, with the Af-
" fections and Luſts. Hereupon therefore I re-
" ſolv'd to withſtand them, if I could; and to this
" end, begg'd the Aſſiſtance of God's Grace; and
" (by the Advice of my Parents, and thoſe good
" Perſons, who, having been Sureties for me, had
" a deſire to diſcharge their Conſciences of that
" Truſt which lay upon them) I applied myſelf
" to the Biſhop for Confirmation: Whereby hav-
" ing obtain'd not only the Bleſſing of my Spiri-
" tual Father, but made Chriſtian Religion now
" my own Act and Choice; and beſides, had put
" ſuch a publick Obligation upon myſelf, as would
" render it very ſhameful for me to go back, or
" retreat; I from that time forward, was under
" a more awful Senſe of God and Religion, and
" felt frequent Motions of the Holy Spirit with-
" in me.

Here I remember, I a little interrupted him, applauding his ſingular Felicity, in being ſo early engaged in the Way of Heaven; by which means, that Courſe was now grown habitual to him, and his Accounts much eaſier at the Day of Judgment.

But he proceeded, ſaying, "It is true, indeed, "it was God's great Goodneſs, to awaken me to "a Senſe of my Duty thus early, as I have told "you: But then, what by the Allurements of "Pleaſures, which have always too poinant a Reliſh with younger Years; what by Engagement "in Buſineſs, which grew upon me afterwards; "and what through the Contagion of Example, "which ſurrounds a Man with too common Inſtances of Careleſneſs in theſe weighty Matters; "I was drawn off from any cloſe attendance upon Religion, until it pleaſed God, in his wiſe Methods of Grace, to lay his Hand upon me, "in a dangerous Fit of Sickneſs: And this, partly, as it ſtain'd all the Beauty of the World, "which heretofore allured me; partly alſo, as it "mortified and enfeebled thoſe bodily Powers "which before were too potent in me; but principally, as it gave me Leiſure and Inclination "to recollect myſelf; I thereupon (ſeeing nothing "but Death before me) fell into a great Concern "for another Life, and ſo by degrees came to a "ſolemn Reſolution of making Religion my chief "Buſineſs, and took all the Care poſſible, that ſo "I might be prepared for the great Day of Trial.

"Now, becauſe this is the Point which (I perceive) you enquire after, I will acquaint you "with the method I purſued; and, to deal faithfully with you, (as I hope I did with my own "Soul) the Streſs of my Preparations lay in theſe "three Things.

"Firſt, Becauſe I was ſure that an holy Life "muſt needs be the beſt Paſſport for the other "World;

" World, therefore I consider'd how I might " keep myself closest to my Duty, and walk in all " the Commandments of God as blameless as it " was possible.

" Secondly, Because I knew that I had failed " heretofore, and I feared I should again, in seve- " ral things, fall short of my Duty; therefore I " bethought myself how I might do something " extraordinary, if not to make up those Defects, " yet to shew at least the Sincerity of my Love to " God and Religion, and the value I had for the " World to come.

" Thirdly, and principally, in Consideration of " the Purity and Justice of God, and the Strict- " ness of his Laws, I desired and endeavoured to " interest myself in the Satisfaction and Intercess- " sion of my Saviour.

" For the First of these, namely the Approving " myself to God in the Integrity of an holy Life, " I considered, that eternal Life not being a thing " of course, or naturally due to Men, but the sin- " gular Gift of God, our Hopes of it, and Title " to it, must depend upon the Performance of " such Conditions as he should think fit to im- " pose; and forasmuch as no Man can know God's " Mind, and what he will be pleased with, unless " he himself reveal it. Therefore, in the first " place, I did not content myself with human " Writings, and moral Discourses, nor much less " to conform myself to the Measures and Customs " of the World; but set myself daily and dili- " gently to study the holy Scriptures, and took " the Measures of my Duty, and the Rule of my " Life thence. And to this I join'd daily and " earnest Prayer, that it would please Divine " Goodness, not only to make me understand his " Will, but guide and enable me to perform it, " that he would preserve me from Prejudices, from

" Inad-

" Inadvertency, from fooliſh Opinions, and raſh
" Actions. And this I perform'd not cuſtomarily
" and formally, as if I complemented God Al-
" mighty; but with my utmoſt vigour, and in-
" tention of Spirit; and never thought I had ac-
" quitted myſelf therein, till I found my Heart
" warmed with its own Motion.

" More particularly, becauſe I found that hard
" Study and Sicklineſs of Body, had made me
" ſomewhat ſubject to the Diſorders of the Iraſci-
" ble, (as heretofore Health and Plenty had en-
" clined me to the Concupiſcible;) therefore
" I vehemently implored the Divine Grace for my
" Relief; and have been frequently conſtrained
" to allay a Storm or Paſſion with a Shower of
" Tears.

" Beſides this, I took ſpecial Care to keep out
" of vicious and licentious Company, which I was
" confident, if it did not taint me with ſome ill
" Example, would be ſure to cool my Heat, and
" abate my Edge to Religion: And contrariwiſe,
" I contriv'd as much as poſſibly I could to keep
" ſuch Converſation as was likely to provoke and
" inflame me in the Courſe I had propounded to
" myſelf.

" And leſt all this ſhould not be ſufficient to ſe-
" cure me of my Intentions, every Evening I e-
" rected a petty Tribunal within myſelf, and called
" myſelf to account for the Day paſt, if I had
" ſlipped any Opportunity of doing or receiving
" Good; if any raſh Word or Action had eſcap'd
" me; if any earthly or ſenſual Affection had been
" ſtirring in me; if I had been guilty of any In-
" ſtances of Injuſtice, that hereafter might riſe up
" in Judgment againſt me, I repented, and made
" my Peace with God and Man, as far as it was
" poſſible, before I ſlept. I examin'd myſelf alſo
" what Progreſs I had made that Day towards

" Heaven; whether, now I had ſpent a Day of
" my Life, I was a Day's Journey onward on my
" Way; and what I had to ſhew for the Ex-
" pence of that Day. I always took, as I ſaid,
" the Evening for this Buſineſs, both in regard of
" the Privacy and Quiet of that Seaſon, and alſo
" becauſe I found that then the Solitude and
" Darkneſs of the Nights were eaſie, and the Sleep
" comfortable, when I had firſt clear'd all Scores:
" And beſides, I was cautious leſt the Interpoſi-
" tion of Sleep ſhould have made me forget the
" Paſſages of the former Day, if I had deferred the
" Account of them till the next.

" Beſides, all this, I found it neceſſary (and ac-
" cordingly practiſed) to ſet one Day aſide in e
" very Month, and more ſolemnly and wholly de-
" dicated it to this Buſineſs, to romage my own
" Heart, to compare myſelf with myſelf, and to
" obſerve how much I advanced in my great De-
" ſign.

" 2. The Second Part of my Care (as I told
" you) was to efface thoſe Errors of my Life
" which had either wittingly or willingly eſcaped
" me. Now to this purpoſe, I was very deſirous
" to do ſome exemplary good Things, that I
" might lift up the Head, and raiſe the Spirit of
" Piety in the World; and the rather to the in-
" tent, that if I had done any hurt by ill Exam-
" ple formerly, I might, when I could, not re-
" voke the Act, yet prevent the Contagion of it.
" And beſides, I was watchful of, and gladly em-
" braced all Opportunities of demonſtrating the
" Sincerity of my Love to God, though it was
" by a coſtly or difficult Service; for I made no
" doubt, but the more there was of ſelf-denial in
" a virtuous Action, the greater was the Evidence
" of Grace and Divine Love in performing it.
" Upon this account, I could well have be-

" conte

content it would have pleaſed God to have given me a juſt occaſion of ſome ſmart, but tolerable Sufferings for him. And with this Proſpect, I have put myſelf upon ſome meaſures of Charity, that were to the very utmoſt of my Ability, if not beyond it: I have interpoſed myſelf voluntarily for the Reſcue of ſome deſolate and oppreſſed Perſon from a potent Adverſary, and thereby derived the Trouble upon myſelf, which I protected that Perſon from. I have put myſelf forward, to reclaim ſome peeviſh, deluded Sectary, or ſome vicious Perſon; from whom I have had very ingrateful Treatment for my Good-Will: That by all, or ſome of theſe, I might ſhew that I loved God as well as myſelf. Not that I had any proud Conceit or Opinion of Supererogation in any Thing I could do or ſuffer: So far from it, That I am ſenſible, that when I have done all I can, I muſt acknowledge myſelf an unprofitable Servant, and that I have not done ſo much as was my Duty to do. Notwithſtanding, as a Subject that hath been in Rebellion againſt his Prince, or ſome way or other diſobliged him, will be glad to be employed in the moſt difficult Services, that he may ſhew his Loyalty, and recover his Favour: So I, who was ſenſible that in many Things I had offended the Divine Majeſty, could not chuſe but prize an Occaſion of doing ſomething more than Matter of ſtrict Duty, that I might ſhew, that nevertheleſs I loved him. And indeed, it ſeems to me, that thoſe who pretend ſo much Modeſty and Humility, as to be ſcrupulous of overdoing in this manner, are only, in reality, afraid of loving him too much; which, I am ſure, is impoſſible. And therefore I find, that ſuch Free-will Offerings give a Man's Heart great

" Assurance, and enable a Man to look with the
" more comfortable Erection of Mind towards
" God, and the Day of Judgment. So I observ-
" ed *Nehemiah*, *chap.* xiii. *v.* 14. when he had
" shewed himself publick-spirited, and generously,
" and with considerable Difficulty and Hazard to
" himself, had asserted the Interest of the oppres-
" sed *Jews*, and their Religion, he then, with an
" holy Confidence, addresses himself to God, in
" these Words; *Remember me, O Lord, for this,*
" *and wipe not out the great Deeds which I have*
" *done*, &c. This, I take it, is *laying up in store*
" *a good Foundation against the Time to come:* This
" is *making Friends of the Mammon of Unright-*
" *ousness, that when we fail, they may receive us*
" *into everlasting Habitations.* Such Actions, I
" say, either of Piety or Charity, aforesaid, are,
" it were, the drawing a Bill upon God Almigh-
" ty, to be paid in the other World; and making
" a wise and frugal Purchase of a Reversion in
" Heaven.

" Wherefore (as I told you) I study'd all Op-
" portunities, and consulted the utmost of my A-
" bility, to do some remarkable good Things, that
" might be beneficial to the World, or to Reli-
" gion, when I was dead and gone; and endea-
" vour'd to sow such Seed, as whose Fruit should,
" by the Grace of God, be fresh and lasting to
" the very Day of Judgment.

" 3. But when all was done, I laid the great-
" est Stress of all upon the third and last Part of
" my Preparation; and that was, in interesting
" myself in the Satisfaction and Intercession of my
" Saviour. For besides the many and great Fail-
" ings I was sensible of, I consider'd also, the Pu-
" rity of the *Divine Nature* was such, *that he*
" *found folly in his Angels*, and detested Sin where-
" ever he found it; that his Law was strict and

" perfect

" perfect; that it was impoſſible any thing ſhould
" be acceptable to ſuch a Majeſty, or make a-
" mends for the Breach of ſuch a Law, but that
" which was perfect too; that nothing could
" make Atonement for Sin, but a Lamb without
" Spot; that nothing could ſucceſsfully intercede
" for us, but the Only Son of God. Therefore
" I ſet an *infinite Value* upon the Diſcovery of the
" *Light and Grace of the Goſpel*, I with all Hearti-
" neſs and Thankfulneſs embraced the Terms of
" the *New Covenant*, I endeavour'd to affect my-
" ſelf with the higheſt Senſe of Love and Grati-
" tude towards my *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, I pleaded
" his Sacrifice in my Prayers, I fed my Faith
" with his Blood, I raiſed my Hopes by having
" ſo powerful an *Advocate* with the *Father*: I
" comforted myſelf againſt the Accuſations of the
" Devil, and my own Conſcience, and all my
" black and melancholy Thoughts, by the Conſi-
" deration, that he was appointed *Judge of the*
" *World*, who was in human Nature, who had
" been ſenſible of our Infirmities, had Experience
" of our Temptations, and had ſo much Good-
" will to us as to die for us. I acknowledged and
" adored his Divinity, I confeſſed him before Men,
" I gloried in his Croſs and Sufferings, I frequent-
" ly obſerved the Memorial of his Death and Paſ-
" ſion in the Sacrament, I joined myſelf to his
" Church, I honoured his Miniſters, I reverenced
" all his Inſtitutions; and, in a Word, as the
" higheſt and trueſt Honour I could do to him,
" I endeavoured to be like him, by Imitation of
" his Sincerity, Purity, Meekneſs, and Goodneſs;
" in Confidence that upon theſe Terms he would
" own me when he comes again in his glorious
" Majeſty.

" This *(ſaid he)* hath been the Courſe and Care
" of my Life, from ſuch time as I became in

" earneſt, ſenſible of the Concern of another " World; and this is the Sum of my conſtant " Preparations for the Day of Judgment: and in " this Poſture I endeavour always to be found " whenſoever God calls me. I confeſs, I ſhould " be right glad (if it pleaſed God to give me Op- " portunity) to make ſome more ſpecial and par- " ticular Preparations againſt the *Approaches* of " Death, if I could be aware of it; and to trim " and ſnuff my Lamp againſt the Bridegroom " comes: But for that God's Will be done; how- " ever, by his Grace, I hope I ſhall not be ut- " terly ſurprized nor diſmayed; having made this " habitual Proviſion for it. Thus far he.

Phil. Your Friend *Eulabes* appears to have been a moſt exemplary, holy, and a wiſe Man; and the Relation which you have given us, as from his own Mouth, exceedingly fits the Character of ſuch a Perſon; for there is both a lively Spirit of Piety breathing in it, and withal ſuch a becoming and proportionable Modeſty, as ſufficiently aſſures the real Truth of the whole Narrative, foraſmuch as I cannot ſuſpect you would impoſe upon us herein; nor can I believe it eaſy (if poſſible) for an evil Man to draw a Scene of Virtue, with ſo many Arguments of Probability. For my own Part, I have been all along ſo affected with it, that nothing hath grieved me ſo much as that you ſeemed to draw towards an End of your Story, as well as the good Man to the End of his Life. And now I have a thouſand Queſtions which I would gladly put to you farther about him, but that I am afraid of being too troubleſome to you; eſpecially, ſince it grows late. However, I pray, pardon me, whilſt I interrogate you a little about the laſt Act of ſo brave a Perſon. I remember, you ſaid, he intended, if God gave him Opportunity, to make ſome more particular and ſpecial Preparations at the

Approaches

Approaches of Death: Now I have a great Curioſity to enquire, whether it pleaſed God to afford him ſuch Opportunities as he wiſhed, and what Uſe he made of them? Gratify me in this, and I will detain you no longer at this Time.

Eulabes's more ſpecial Preparations for Death towards the Approaches of it.

Sebaſt. Why, therein, dear *Phil.* I will ſatisfy you as well as I am able. You muſt know therefore that *Eulabes* having, through the Courſe of his whole Life maintain'd a ſtrict Temperance, and now well advanc'd in Years, it happened to him, (as it is uſual in ſuch Caſes) by the good Providence of God, to have a gradual and leiſurely Diſſolution; he was neither racked to Death by the intolerable Pains of the Gout or Stone, nor hurry'd out of the World in the fiery Chariot of a violent Fever, nor ſtabb'd by an Apoplexy, nor ſtupified by a Lethargy, but was mildly and gently ſummoned by a lingring Sickneſs, ſo that inſenſibly he felt himſelf dying. By this means he had both Time, Strength and Underſtanding to ſettle every thing according to his Wiſhes. When therefore he ſaw the Harbingers of Death draw on towards him, and that he could not long maintain the little Fort of Life againſt the confederate Force of ſo many Infirmities as beſieged it, he then diſpoſed himſelf for a Surrender.

In the firſt Place, having formerly, in better Health, made his Will, and ſettled his temporal Affairs, he now diſmiſſed all Buſineſs, forbid all impertinent Talk, all troubleſome Viſitants, and diſcharged his Phyſicians alſo, as finding no farther Uſe of them; and forthwith ſent for the Phyſician of his Soul, the Miniſter of his Pariſh; a plain, hearty, and ſincerely good Man. And he being come, my Friend addreſſes himſelf to him, giving him hearty Thanks for all the Pains he had taken

in the Courſe of his Miniſtry in that Place to do their Souls good. *Wherein* (ſaith he) *it hath pleaſed God ſo to order it, that you have often come home to my Caſe, and touched the very Diſtemper of my Heart, as if you had been within me; for which I humbly thank almighty God, and again and again thank you; and pray God reward it in another World.*

Now, Sir, (proceeded he) *that great Judge of all the World is calling me to Account of all the Actions of my Life; I have therefore ſent for you to audite them before hand, that ſo, by your Aſſiſtance, I may either know my Errors, and repair whatſoever is amiſs, whilſt yet I have a little time left me to do it in; or, if I have ſtated my Matters rightly, may appear with the better Aſſurance at that Tribunal. I have always found you faithful in your Doctrine, and I do not doubt but you will be impartial in this Application.*

At this Point I offered to go out and leave them private; which he perceiving, took me by one Hand, and the Miniſter by the other, and then continued his Diſcourſe. *I will give you* (ſaid he to the Miniſter) *the Hiſtory of my Life; at leaſt, I will not conceal from you any main Paſſage of it, be it for me or againſt me; that ſo you may paſs a Judgment upon my ſpiritual State: And I deſire you, my dear Friend* Sebaſtian, *to be preſent, who have been privy to the moſt critical Moments of it; to the Intent that you may witneſs againſt me before this Man of God if I falſify in any thing.* This ſaid, he laid open the Courſe of his Life; and, amongſt ſeveral other things, which either I do not now ſo well remember, or think not fit to repeat, he delivered the Subſtance of that, whereof I have given you a large Account before; and then he conjured him, in the Name of God, to deal freely and plainly with him upon the whole Matter.

The holy Man, (like a Jury, in a manifeſt Caſe)

without long Deliberation, quickly brought in a Verdict of Comfort to him. Which when *Eulabes* perceived, with his Eyes fix'd upon him, and a Countenance ſomewhat cheared; *Well*, ſaid he, *God be thanked, if it be ſo, as I hope it is; for I reſt aſſured almighty Goodneſs deſpiſes not the meaneſt Sincerity. But I humbly and earneſtly beſeech you, Sir, give me alſo the Abſolution of the Church, that I may go out of the World under the Comfort of ſo publick and authentick a Teſtimony.* Which when the Miniſter had ſolemnly performed, he intreated him farther to adminiſter to him the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper; that ſo* (ſaid he) *ſeeing, as it were, my Saviour crucified before my Eyes, and pouring out his Blood for Sinners; I may the more firmly believe the Pardon of my own Sins, and upon the Wings of Faith and Affection raiſe my ſelf towards Heaven.*

This, after the Interpoſition of Prayers and Meditation, and holy Diſcourſe, was adminiſter'd to him: But, Lord! What an Ecſtaſy of Devotion was the good Man now in! What Tokens of Humility, Affection, Thankfulneſs, and Intention of Mind were then to be read in his Countenance and Deportment! Moſt certainly, *Chriſt Jeſus* was preſent really tho' not carnally; and his Soul fed it ſelf moſt ſavourily upon him. Theſe things being done, he diſmiſſed the Miniſter for that time, not without real Expreſſions of his Thankfulneſs to him for his Pains and Aſſiſtance, not without a liberal Alms to be diſpoſed at his Diſcretion amongſt the Poor; earneſtly intreating him to remember him conſtantly in the Prayers of the Church, that thereby he might be holpen on his Journey towards Heaven, where he hoped ſhortly to arrive.

Some time after this, when by ſome Repoſe he had recover'd a little Strength, his Family was call'd together to his Bed-ſide, with ſome others of his

his Friends and Relations; all whom he moſt earneſtly cautioned againſt Looſeneſs of Life, and Prophaneneſs of Spirit; aſſuring them, in the Words of a dying Man, of the great Reality and infinite Importance of Religion. He charged them, as they would anſwer it at that great Day, which was certainly coming, that they ſhould not ſuffer themſelves, either to be debauched into Careleſſneſs and Lukewarmneſs, nor abuſed and cheated into Fantaſtry and Opinionativeneſs in Religion; but perſiſt in the good old Way, reverence their Miniſter, keep to their Church, and make the ſerving of God the greateſt Care and Buſineſs of their Lives. Then he diſcourſed admirably to them of the Vanity of the World, the Uncertainty of Life, the Comforts of Religion, and the Joys of Heaven, till his Spirits began to be ſpent, and his Speech a little to faulter. At other times he retreated into himſelf, and entertained Converſe with God by Prayers and holy Meditations; in which, what were the Elevations of his Faith, what the holy Raptures of his Love, what humble Abjections of himſelf at the Feet of *Chriſt*, what Reſignations of himſelf to the Will of God, what pleading of the Promiſes of the Goſpel, and Recumbency upon the Interceſſion of his Saviour, we could not be privy to, farther than as we ſaw his Hands and Eyes earneſtly lift up to Heaven; ſometimes a Stream of Tears falling from his Eyes, and other times, interchangeably, a chearful Smile ſitting upon his Countenance. In which Poſture, bodily Strength being now exhauſted, he, with a gentle Sigh, reſigned up his Soul to God.

Thus I have given you the laſt Paſſages of this good Man, (now, no doubt, in Heaven) if I have not tired you with the Relation; tho' I confeſs, I am not very apt to ſuſpect that, both becauſe I have done it in Compliance with your Deſire;

and

and beſides, I judge of other Men by my ſelf; and becauſe I am never weary of thinking or ſpeaking of him, therefore imagine other Men may be of the ſame Mind.

Phil. Ah, Sir! So far from being weary of ſuch kind of Diſcourſe, that I could willingly have forgot all other things for it, and been glad this *Evening-Conference* had continued till to morrow-Morning: But I conſider, Devotion muſt not too much intrench upon Civility; therefore I return you my hearty Thanks for my good Entertainment, and take my leave for this time.

Bioph. I thank you both for your good Company, and your charitable Offices towards my Satisfaction; and I do already aſſure you of this Fruit of it, that by your Converſation I have learnt, that all Religion is not acting a Part, and playing the Hypocrite, which I was apt to ſuſpect heretofore; for I ſee you both are ſo really hearty, and in earneſt in it, and yet Men of greater Sagacity than my ſelf, that I tell you truly, I begin to think it becomes me ſeriouſly to conſider of it. Good Night to you, good *Sebaſtian*.

The End of the Second Conference.

A Win-

A

Winter-Evening CONFERENCE.

PART III.

Φθείρουσιν ἤθη χρῆσθαι ὁμιλίαι κακαί.

Ex Menand. in *Thaide.*

Evil Communications corrupt good Manners.

1 Cor. xv. 33.

BOOK III.

CONFERENCE

TO THE READER.

THE Papers before thee contain a Relation of a third Conference between the ſame Perſons who held the two former, (which were made publick about two Years ſince.) And this is purſuant of the ſame general Deſign that was then laid, namely, to raiſe the Rate and Subject of Men's Converſation, and to bring religious Diſcourſe a little more into Faſhion, than which nothing can be more genteel and manly, nor any thing either more uſeful, pleaſant or graceful, when once Men are accuſtomed to it, and know how to manage it with an equal Temperature of Affection and Gravity.

The ſpecial Matter of the preſent Conference is jointly to repreſent, as well the Prudence and Comfortableneſs, as the juſt Reaſon and Neceſſity of Religion.

And whether that great Point be here made out, with that clear Evidence which ſuch a Subject deſerves and requires, muſt be left to thy Judgment.

But if I ſhall not be thought too much a Party to interpoſe my Opinion, I proſeſs ſincerely that I verily think

think both the Intereſt of Piety and of comfortable living are hereby conſiderably promoted.

And as for the Perſons that ſpent their Winter-Evening *in this manner; I can aſſure thee, that they are ſo well ſatisfied in this Employment of their time, that (though probably thou wilt never hear more of them in Print, yet) they are reſolved to continue this Courſe privately among themſelves; as finding it to be both more delightful and more profitable, than either* Coffee-Houſe *Club or* Tavern *Aſſignations.*

That which I am to requeſt of thee at preſent is, that thou wilt conſult thy Reaſon and Conſcience in the Peruſal of theſe Papers, and (for the time at leaſt) lay aſide drolling Wit and Phantaſtry: For I am well aware, that if thou canſt find in thy Heart to trifle in ſo ſerious a Concern, thou mayeſt raiſe a Prejudice in thy ſelf and others againſt what is here preſented: For that Temper will eaſily apprehend ſeveral little things to play upon in this way of Writing.

But if thou wilt uſe that Candour with which the former Eſſays of this kind were entertained, thou wilt then look attentively at the main Deſign, and finding that to be both pious and generous, diſpoſe thy ſelf to make ſuch Allowances for Circumſtances as uſe to be made to private Converſation amongſt Friends and Neighbours; conſidering that in thoſe Caſes Men uſually ſpeak with almoſt the ſame Security that they think.

There is one thing more which I am obliged to preface on the Behalf of Sebaſtian; *that whereas in the proving to* Biophilus *that there is a God, and in explicating the divine Nature, he hath made uſe of two or three metaphyſical Terms, thou wilt not impute it either to his Affectation of hard Words, or much leſs think that he takes Sanctuary in obſcure Phraſes: But rather conſider that it was impoſſible*

to avoid them without multiplying Words, and so drawing the Argument out at so great a length, as would have been much more inconvenient than that which thou complainest of.

I add no more, but heartily commend this little Book to thy Acceptance, and thee to the Grace of God, and the Comforts of his Holy Spirit.

Farewel.

The Characters *of the* Persons *in the following* Conference.

Sebastian, a learned and pious Gentleman, who takes all Occasions of engaging those he converses with in Sobriety and a Sense of Religion.

Philander, a genteel and ingenious Person, but too much addicted to the Lightnesses of the Age, till reclaimed by the Conversation of *Sebastian*.

Biophilus, a sceptical Person, who had no settled Belief of any thing; but especially was averse to the great Doctrines of Christianity, concerning the Immortality of the Soul, and the Life to come; and therefore consequently was much concerned for the present Life. 'Till at length awakened by the discreet Reasonings of *Sebastian*, and the affectionate Discourses of *Philander*, he begins to deliberate of what before he despised.

The ARGUMENT of the Third CONFERENCE.

Sebaſtian *and* Philander, *two very good Men and intimate Friends, meeting together at the Houſe of* Biophilus, *(in purſuance of a former Reſolution taken between them) under the allegorical diſguiſe of a Journey to* Urania, *begin to talk warmly of Religion and another World.* Biophilus, *who had never yet entertained any ſerious Apprehenſions of thoſe Matters, wonders at their Diſcourſe, which he eſteems to be no better than romantick, and profeſſes his Suſpicion, that either Wine had heated them, or Enthuſiaſm had tranſported them. Both which groundleſs Conceits of his, when* Sebaſtian *had effectually confuted, he then proceeds to make a twofold Effort upon* Biophilus, *to bring him into the ſame ſenſe of things with himſelf and* Philander. *In the former he attacks him where he thought he was moſt acceſſible; and upon the account of prudence, and the common concern of ſelf-preſervation, preſſes him to a regard of Religion, as that without which no Man can either live or die comfortably. And when by this means he had in ſome meaſure diſpoſed him to be ſerious, he then in the ſecond place repreſents to him the whole Scheme of Religion, and now renders it as rational in it ſelf, as before he had ſhewed it to be*

prudent and important. Hereupon the ſceptical Gentleman, after abundance of ſhifts and evaſions, is at laſt brought to a Non-plus. *And thenceforth begins to enquire very modeſtly into the nature of Religion in general, and of the Chriſtian Religion in particular; which when* Sebaſtian *had alſo inſtructed him in, he promiſes to ſtudy it diligently for the time to come. Then* Sebaſtian *and* Philander *leaving him under that good reſolution, entertain one another with very pious and uſeful Diſcourſes, partly of the neceſſity of conſtancy in Religion, and the conſiderations that will maintain it, partly of the means of obtaining and preſerving an even temper of ſpiritual Comfort through the whole courſe of a Chriſtian Life. And ſo the Night parts them.*

A WIN-

A WINTER-EVENING CONFERENCE BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS.

PART III.

SEBASTIAN, PHILANDER, BIOPHILUS,

Sebastian. WELL met again, Gentlemen; I hope we shall one Day meet in Heaven.

Philander, God grant it, good *Sebastian*; and truly for my part, I am persuaded we shall the sooner come there, the more we have of your Company and Conversation in the mean time.

Sebast. No Complements, *Philander*; I am glad to observe you so chearful. Come, Gentlemen, what think you of our Journey, I hope by this

time *Biophilus* is reſolved: You promiſed, Sir, to conſider of it.

Biophilus. I have conſider'd a little, but in truth I think Winter no good time for travelling, eſpecially for the undertaking of ſo long a Journey.

Sebaſt. Be not diſcourag'd, Sir, the Journey is not ſo long as perhaps you may fanſy it to be; and the way is ſo very good, that it is but taking up a good Reſolution, and we ſhall be there preſently.

Phil. Nay (if I miſtake not) we may make ſome conſiderable advance that way, even as we now ſit by the Fire-ſide.

Bioph. You talk merrily, *Phil.* like a Man that hath travell'd all the World over in a Map, and yet never went beyond the Smoke of his own Chimney.

Sebaſt. You will think it ſtrange, perhaps, but it's very true, that no time ſo good as Winter for this Expedition; the ſhort Days, dark and cold Nights, the very dirt and wet, and all the ſeeming diſadvantages of the Seaſon (which probably may run in your Head, *Biophilus*) all make for our purpoſe. The Severities of the Weather which conſtrain us to lay aſide other Buſineſs, give us the more leiſure to attend this; the ſhort Days are follow'd with long Evenings, which afford us opportunity to ſet things in order, to diſcourſe together, and to inſtruct and animate one another in our intended Enterprize; and in the dark ſolitary Nights (our Minds being then free from the diſtraction of variety of Objects) our thoughts will run this way with wonderful ſpeed, if we do but direct them aright. So that (as *Philander* ſaid) in truth we may ſo order it, as to make real progreſs towards our deſigned Port, even as we ſit here.

Winter and old Age are peculiar Seaſons for the Buſineſs of another World.

Bioph.

Bioph. Nay, if *Philander* have ſuch a Voucher, I know not what to ſay; but in Earneſt I am ſomewhat too old and crazy to undertake the Journey.

Sebaſt. Nay, believe me, the older the better. An old Man, if he ſet to it in earneſt, will outſtrip all others in this Voyage; ſuch Men will loſe no time in trifles; Experience hath taught them Caution, and made them very wary of all Diverſions and Impediments, and they have leſs Clog of Fleſh and Blood about them. In ſhort, ſuch Men are ſo ſenſible of the Inconveniences of this our preſent Countrey, that it is great odds, but they will put on ſo vigorouſly as to get to their Journey's End before the youngeſt of us all. Beſides all which it is very conſiderable, that the older and more infirm any Man is, the more need he hath of the Relief of that benign and wholſome Air, and to be at reſt in that quiet and peaceable Region of *Urania* *, whither we are going.

* *See* Conſer. II. Pag. 112, &c.

Bioph. I ſee you are too many for me at this Way of Drollery; but now that I know whereabouts you are, I muſt be forced to tell you plainly, that (though I very much eſteem your Company) I am ſorry you have fallen again upon this Romance of *Urania*: Is it not time to lay aſide this new kind of Knight-Errantry?

Sebaſt. You may remember, *Biophilus*, (by what paſſed between us at our laſt meeting) that by *Urania* we mean nothing leſs than the Kingdom of Heaven; and by taking a Journey thither, we (conſequently) intend nothing elſe than Religion, and a devout Proſecution of Happineſs in another World. Now therefore if you will not be perſuaded to bear us Company in the Expedition, yet can you find in your Heart to reproach either the End or the Means (as you ſeem to do) the former under the contemptible Name of a Romance, and the latter by that of Knight-Errantry?

What, in the Name of God, do you call Realities, if theſe things be romantick?

The Vanity of this World, and Reality of that which is to come.

As for the preſent World it is notoriouſly a mere piece of Pageantry, and all the Glory of it paſſes away in a vain Shew; and if in it ſelf it were not altogether ſo inconſiderable as Experience ſhews it to be; yet humane Life is ſo very ſhort that a Man can be little more than a Spectator of that Pomp as it paſſes by him. For by that time he begins to live, he more than begins to die. Either therefore there muſt be another Life and a World to come in Reality, or elſe nothing at all is ſo, but all is Romance indeed.

Bioph. I cry you mercy, if I uſed an indecent Expreſſion. I did not intend to give any Offence, nor is it either my Temper or Cuſtom to put Affronts upon other Men's Perſuaſions; but I appeal to you, *Sebaſtian*, (as a Man of Judgment) what Name ought I to call that thing by, of which (when I hear Men talk confidently) I have notwithſtanding neither any Senſe in my own Mind, nor ſee any rational Ground to believe it.

Sebaſt. I acknowledge your Civility, good *Biophilus*, and in anſwer to your Queſtion, I tell you truly, that without any Offence to me you may call that thing by what Name you pleaſe, of which no rational Account can be given (let Men talk as confidently of it as they will) provided you have taken full Information about it, and have ſo maturely and impartially conſider'd of it, that you may be thought a competent Judge in the Caſe: But otherwiſe, let me tell you, you may happen to call ſome of the moſt certain Truths in Nature by ſome ſuch opprobrious Names; foraſmuch as ſome very certain things may on the ſudden, and at the firſt Glimpſe, ſeem not only mere

Serious Conſideration neceſſary to Religion.

Para-

Paradoxes, but utter Impoſſibilities; which yet afterwards upon more deliberate Enquiry will abundantly confute that Cenſure by their own Evidence.

And even in ſenſible Perceptions you know it is not ſufficient that a Man have Eyes in his Head, but there muſt be a fit Diſpoſition of thoſe Eyes, a proper Medium or well diſpoſed Air, convenient Light, due Diſtance of the Object, and competent time for our Senſes to ſurvey and take hold of it, or elſe we ſhall make no true Eſtimate of that which is preſented to us. Now if you transfer this to Religion, and imitate the ſame Care and Caution in judging of that, you will doubtleſs be ſo far from concluding it to be a Romance, that you will find it not only recommended to you by the Wiſdom and Experience of all the World, but agreeable to the Reaſon of your own Mind, and to the internal Senſe of your own Conſcience. And which is more, you will obſerve the Belief of thoſe things whereupon it is founded to be ſo neceſſary, and of ſuch Moment and Conſequence, as that they will appear to be the very Pillars of the World, the Bond of humane Society, and the very things wherein your own neareſt and moſt peculiar Intereſt is involved; inſomuch, that it will be utterly impoſſible that you ſhould either live or die comfortably without an hearty Perſuaſion of them.

Bioph. Now you ſpeak like your ſelf, and I underſtand you, but I hope I underſtand my ſelf better than to be willing to be reputed an Enemy to civil Society, or much leſs to be an Enemy to my ſelf; let me therefore ſee thoſe two things which you laſt mentioned clearly made out, and (without farther Trouble to you) I ſhall think myſelf obliged to take new Meaſures, or at leaſt to make more diligent Enquiry into this Affair.

Sebaſt. Though I ſhould have been right glad to have

have found you better resolv'd, and hoped that this present Conference should rather have been directed to the encouraging one another in our Course, than spent in disputing our Port; yet in hopes that at length you will become a Votary for the Holy Land, I will comply with your Desires, and represent to you the Evidence of those two things you insist upon.

The Danger of Irreligion to civil Society.

And for the first you will easily be sensible of the Influence of Religion upon civil Society, when you consider how inconceivable it is, that mere external Force, or Fear of humane Punishment, should be sufficient to keep the World in Order, when (as it often happens) lewd and flagitious Men shall find themselves either secured from that Danger by the Secrecy of their Plots, or protected by their Strength and Multitude. And then you must acknowledge that to the Ends aforeused there is a Necessity that some superior Power not only protect Governors from Violence, but also strike the Minds of Men with an awful Apprehension of them as his Favourites and Vicegerents; but this cannot be done but upon such Principles of Religion as we now speak of; therefore he that infringes that, weakens both Law and Government, and is an Enemy to civil Society.

Again, there can be no Obligation of Oaths, and consequently no Security of Faith and Trust between Man and Man, but upon Supposition of a God that takes notice of what Men do, and who will call them to an Account accordingly in another World: So that the Man who is destitute of these Persuasions, can neither give Security of his Loyalty to his Prince, nor of Fidelity to his Friend or Neighbour, or any Man he deals with.

Bioph. Why, I pray you, *Sebastian*, may not Men

Men truſt one another upon the Security of Honour, good Nature or Gratitude, or ſome ſuch Obligation, without thoſe Fetters of Conſcience which you ſpeak of.

Sebaſt. Alas, alas, *Biophilus*, all thoſe Bonds which you mention are too weak to reſtrain the licentious Humour of Mind; they may put ſome little Byaſs upon Men's Spirits, but they cannot bridle their Paſſions, curb their Deſire of Revenge, nor prevail with them to deny their extravagant Intereſts and Inclinations, when they ſhall have an Opportunity to gratify any of them, as we find by daily Experience. For in all the Obligations (below Religion and Conſcience) a Man is ſuppoſed to be accountable only to himſelf; and therefore may diſpenſe with himſelf, and acquit himſelf upon what Terms he pleaſes. And therefore wiſe Men, and eſpecially wiſe Princes, uſe not to truſt to any of thoſe defeaſible Securities, but only to that of Religion.

Bioph. Well, but have not Pretenders to Religion played faſt and looſe with Laws and Government, as well as other Men? Nay, generally you ſhall obſerve, that a bigotted Sort of Men are the principal Conſpirators and Actors of moſt of the Tumults and Diſorders in the World.

Sebaſt. If I ſhould object to you the daily and horrible Violations of Faith amongſt the Pretenders to Honour, Ingenuity and Gratitude, I know you would anſwer me, that thoſe Perſons were not really Men of Honour, *&c.* but only Pretenders. And ſo you may anſwer your ſelf in this Caſe, namely, that they are but Pretenders to the real Principles of Religion, that falſifie their Faith and diſturb Government.

Beſides, if I ſhould grant you that the very Bonds of Religion are not able always to reſtrain the Rage and Folly of ſome exorbitant Perſons; yet

yet certainly it is the moſt powerful means amongſt Mankind to that End, and incomparably beyond all thoſe you have named, for the ſake of that Reaſon I have already given you. And therefore (as I was about to ſay) you may remember, when upon Occaſion, *Ptolemy* King of *Ægypt*, ſent one *Theodorus*, in the Quality of his Embaſſador to *Lyſimachus*; this latter refuſes to treat with him, or admit him under that Character, becauſe he was reputed an Atheiſt; and being ſuch, he looked upon him as a Perſon with whom there could be no Security of civil Intercourſe.

Bioph. I remember the Story, but I pray you then (by the way) if *Lyſimachus*'s Objection againſt *Theodorus* was ſufficient, how came *Ptolemy* notwithſtanding to truſt him with the Management of his Affairs?

Sebaſt. Truly I can give you no other Anſwer, but that it ſeems he did not well underſtand the looſe Tenure of an Atheiſt, nor had ſo much Prudence as his Neighbour. But let that paſs, if you pleaſe, and give me leave in the next Place to repreſent to you every Man's perſonal Concern in the Truth of Religion, which is ſuch (as I intimated before) that no Man can either live or die comfortably without it.

Bioph. Ay, with all my Heart. Let Princes and States alone to manage their own Matters. Shew me but that one Point you laſt mentioned, and it ſhall ſuffice in the preſent Caſe.

Sebaſt. For that, *Biophilus*, you will eaſily apprehend, that no Man can die chearfully without the Supports of Religion (I mean if he die ſenſibly, and with his Wits about him) becauſe the very beſt of ſuch a Man's Game, and the ſum of his Expectations can be but this, That he ſhall die like the Beaſt, and that vital Principle in him which we call the Soul, ſhall be abſolutely extinguiſhed;

guiſhed: So that he ſhall thenceforth as perfectly ceaſe to be what he was, as if he had never been. Now this I ſuppoſe you will readily grant me, muſt needs be not only a very uncomfortable Proſpect, but ſuch a Condition as a Man cannot think of without juſt Abhorrence, nor be reconciled to, without as great a Contradiction, as it were for him to be ſuppoſed to hate his own Being which ſurely is impoſſible.

Death very uncomfortable without the Supports of Religion.

Yet (as I ſaid) this is the very beſt of the irreligious Man's Caſe, and that which he can never be ſecure, will be the worſt that ſhall befall him; for if it ſhall prove in the iſſue of things, that there is another World, (and at leaſt it may do ſo for ought he knows) then his Caſe is ſo much worſe, as that now by Death he muſt enter upon an Eſtate for ever, which he hath had no Foreſight of, nor made any Preparations for. He encounters a God, whom he hath taken no care to propitiate towards himſelf in all the Courſe of his Life, by any Acts of Piety and Devotion, and what a diſmal Plunge muſt the Approaches of Death (together with ſuch a Surprizal) of neceſſity put ſuch a Man into?

Bioph. As for Death, I ſhall eaſily grant all you ſay, for that is no very comfortable thing at the beſt; the only refuge I know is, to make a virtue of neceſſity, and ſeeing die we muſt, to take it patiently: But for that reaſon I am reſolved to live as long as I can, and as chearfully too, and why may not this be done without the Buſineſs of Religion?

Sebaſt. In truth, *Biophilus*, the impoſſibility of living comfortably, without the helps of Religion, is every whit as evident

No Man can live comfortably, but upon the grounds of Religion.

as that of dying ſo, and for the very ſame reaſon, foraſmuch as whatſoever renders Death terrible, muſt needs make Life uneaſie too. For ſince Death is acknowledged to be unavoidable, it cannot chuſe but run continually in ſuch a Man's Head, ſhortly I muſt die, and either everlaſtingly ceaſe to be, or (which is far worſe) begin to be eternally miſerable: The leaſt of which two things (without the miſerable refuge of a perpetual Debauch to keep ſuch a Man from thinking) muſt be of force enough to make his Heart ake, and to ſpoil all the pleaſures of the preſent Life: Eſpecially conſidering withal, the uncertainty of the tenure, and the innumerable accidents of human Life; which laſt Circumſtance makes it to become juſt matter of fear at all times, that by ſome or other of thoſe accidents of Mortality, his frail Thread may abruptly be broken; and conſequently who knows but by to Morrow, not only all his Projects and Contrivances, but all his Delights and Entertaiments will ſuffer a total Interruption.

But then, if there be a God and another World, (which he can never be ſure that there is not) then he can expect nothing leſs than very ſuddenly to fall under the Vengeance of that great Majeſty whom he hath always provoked and never appeaſed.

The cauſes of the timorouſneſs of Atheiſts.

Beſides all this, as we commonly obſerve, that Atheiſtical Perſons are of all Men the moſt timorous; ſo there is great reaſon for it, if we conſider what a dark and melancholy thing it muſt needs be, for ſo impotent a Creature as a Man is, to live in a World without a God, and without the ſecurity of a Providence; for there are a thouſand things confeſſedly too ſtrong for us, and which are able to cruſh and de-

ſtroy us every Moment. And in this caſe, where a Man hath no help in himſelf, if he have no Guardian about him neither, if (I ſay) he cannot look up to ſome higher Being as his Patron and Protector, it were mere madneſs to be Valiant; for all the grounds of Courage fail him, and therefore no wonder if his Spirits be broken and baffled by the danger of his Caſe, and the loneſomneſs of his Condition.

Upon which account a Perſon of Honour, and a great Wit of this preſent Age acknowledged ſome time before his Death; *Late Earl of* Rochester.

"That altho' he for his part,
"had no feeling of the Com-
"forts of Religion, yet he accounted thoſe to be
"happy Men that could and did live under the
"advantage of it. For indeed, Life is not Life without thoſe ſupports which that (and that only) affords us. But when a Man hath, by the benefit of that holy Prudence, put all his intereſt into God's cuſtody, and ſecur'd himſelf of another World, then he begins to live indeed, then he may laugh at the preſent World, deſpiſe temporal Life, and defie Death; foraſmuch as thenceforth he is out of the reach of Chance, Fate, or Fortune.

Phil. 'Tis true, *Biophilus*, 'tis true, as *Sebaſtian* ſaith, the World to come is the only Reality, and Religion the only Comfort. O happy we that know there is a God in the World, under whoſe Providence we live! and bleſſed be that divine Goodneſs, which hath provided another World to receive us, and there promiſed us eternal Life. Philander *raviſhed with the Comforts of Religion.*

O *Urania*, *Urania*, (Heaven I mean) thou end of Cares and Fears, and beginning of Joy without end! thou reſt of Souls, and only ſatisfaction of great and wiſe Minds! I am raviſh'd with the thoughts

thoughts of thee, I am ſo tranſported with hopes of thee, that I am become all Life and Spirit; methinks I begin to have Wings, and could fly to Heaven.

Bioph. Sebaſtian ſpeaks ſhrewdly, I confeſs, but you, *Philander*, are too high a Flyer for me; you are ſo much in the Altitudes, that you muſt pardon me, if I a little ſuſpect that you have (according to your former cuſtom) been taking of a chearful Cup, which as a wiſe Man obſerves, *Makes Men ſpeak all things by Talents*, 1 Eſdr. iii. 3,.21.

Phil. You are in the very right of it, *Biophilus*, I have taken a Doſe, and a luſty one too (as *Sebaſtian* will be my witneſs) ſo that I find my ſelf not a little elevated at this time. But, miſtake me not, it is not with Drink; no (tho' I ſay it) I am grown a better Husband, and more frugal of my time, than to ſpend it on a Debauch: Or (if you will) I am become a great Coward, and am afraid of an after reckoning.

Bioph. What reckoning, Man?

Phil. Nay, no other than that which *Sebaſtian* hath given us warning of, *the Judgment to come*. For I muſt tell you, I very much doubt whether God Almighty (who hath endowed us with theſe noble Faculties, and thereby ſeems to have deſigned us for excellent Purpoſes, and who hath alſo appointed our time to be but ſhort in this World) will take it well at our Hands, that we ſhould drown the one, and drivel away the other in Senſuality.

The ſin and danger of Drunkenneſs, and that the pleaſures of it are falſe and deluſory.

Bioph. Now you grow ſerious, but what made you ſo brisk even now? In truth I ſuſpected you might have been bitten with your own Dog (as they ſay) and had prevented the Civility of my Houſe by a liberal Glaſs at home.

Phil.

Phil. O *Biophilus*, I thank God, I am come to that paſs now, that I can dance without a Fiddle, and be merry without the aid of the Bottle, and I look upon thoſe Men to be in a very pitiable Condition that cannot do ſo. For I have learned by my former unhappy experience, that thoſe *liquid Conſolations* are mere cheats and palliative cures of Melancholy; and tho' perhaps a Man may by the help of them rid himſelf of the trouble of his own Thoughts for the preſent (which is all that Wine can pretend to) yet he doth but reprieve himſelf for a time, and he will find himſelf again juſt where he was, as ſoon as he becomes ſober; for Conſcience is not to be torally drowned in Drink, nor the clamour thereof to be deaded by the noiſe of Huzza's.

Sebaſt. It is very true which *Philander* ſaith; for generally the Mirth of a Debauch, as it is ſtrained and artificial, ſo it cannot laſt long: It is at beſt but like the Effects of a ſtrong Cordial, which may ſerve to rally the Spirits for ſome preſent encounter, but then they are ſpent in the Conflict, and fall and flag again quickly after; or like thoſe mighty Efforts which you ſhall obſerve ſome Perſons to make in a Convulſion, the Reſult of which will be, that ſuch a Man ſhall become ſo much leſs than himſelf after the Fit, as he was more than himſelf whilſt it was upon him: For any Man ſhall find, that whenſoever the Spirits are extraordinarily exhilarated and dilated, they thereby become ſo thin and volatile, that they eaſily exhale and vaniſh, and ſo a Man becomes far more melancholy and lumpiſh after, than he was before.

But now in intellectual Delights and Entertainments, wherein a Man may be merry and wiſe together, and ſo have no Fear of an After-reckoning to pall the preſent Enjoyment, and eſpecially

in ſuch Pleaſures as come in upon the account of Religion, they afford a ſtill and ſedate Delight, which refreſh the Heart more than dilate the Countenance, and gently raiſe and ſtrengthen the Spirits, but do not in any Meaſure exhauſt them.

Bioph. You diſcourſe ingeniouſly, *Sebaſtian*, but ſure you have not mended the Matter; for it is as good to be drunk with Wine as with Conceitedneſs, which is the more laſting Diſtemper; and I pray let me ſee if you can excuſe this tranſport of *Philander* from Fanaticiſm, as well as from that which I at firſt ſuſpected, for ſure it muſt be one of them.

That religious Joy is not fanatical and the the nature of Fanaticiſm explained.

Sebaſt. Why, *Biophilus*, do you think a Man cannot be Chearful, unleſs he be either Mad or Drunk?

Bioph. It ſeems then, in your Opinion, Fanaticiſm is Madneſs.

Sebaſt. Truly, Sir, I profeſs to you, I take it to be little better; eſpecially, if it be in any high Degree. For what (I pray you) is it to be Mad, but for a Man's Fancy or Paſſions ſo to get head of him, that he is hurried on wildly and extravagantly, by ſuch an unaccountable *impetus*, as that his Reaſon (the common Principle of Mankind) is not able to reſtrain or govern him? And on the other ſide, what is it for a Man to fear without Danger, and to hope without Ground; to believe without Reaſon, and to think or ſpeak, or do ſuch Things, whereof he can give no account which is intelligible by the reſt of Mankind? This I take to be Fanaticiſm; and this is as plainly a Diſeaſe and a Fit of the Body, as thoſe Convulſions which we ſpake of but now.

As for Example, if you ſhall obſerve a Man pretend to believe plain Impoſſibilities, and not only ſupinely and credulouſly ſwallow them, but confidently

fidently avouch and maintain them; it may be in regard of his Seriouſneſs and good Meaning, you will call him an Enthuſiaſt or Fanatick: Yet foraſmuch as you are ſatisfied that the Things he is ſo confident of, are Contradictions to the common Senſe and Experience of Mankind (notwithſtanding his Confidence and Devotion) you will conclude he is governed by other Principles than thoſe of a Man, and conſequently, that he is beſides himſelf, and under ſome degree of Madneſs.

Again, when you ſee a Man, who can make no Pretence to any Character of publick Authority, nor can give any ſufficient Proof of any ſpecial and extraordinary Commiſſion from God Almighty, ſhall notwithſtanding be acted by ſuch a heady and intemperate Zeal, as to ſuperſede the publick Magiſtrate, and to take upon himſelf to govern and reform the World; this indeed is Fanaticiſm, but it cannot be acquitted of ſome Spice of Madneſs withal.

Or laſtly (to come more home to you) when a Man ſhall be perplexed with endleſs Scruples, and Fears and Doubts of the Danger and Damnableneſs of ſuch Things as are manifeſtly the Violation of no Law, and ſhall be dejected in his Conſcience, and ready to ſink into Deſperation; at ſuch time as yet he is not conſcious to himſelf of either omitting any known Duty, or committing any wicked Thing: Or on the other ſide, when a Man ſhall run into the other Extream, and be tranſported with Joy, and raviſhed with comfort; but upon no more intelligible Grounds than he had before for his Fears and Dejections of Spirit. Both theſe Caſes may be very pitiable, but they are as well plain Symptoms of a crazy Mind, as they are Inſtances of Fanaticiſm. But——

Bioph. I am very glad to hear theſe things from you, *Sebaſtian*, and that you have ſo ſlight an

Opinion of that ſort of Men, who make ſuch a Figure, or rather ſuch a Duſt in the World.

Sebaſt. So far then we are agreed, but by your Favour, I believe all this which I have ſaid will make nothing towards the Proof of your Charge againſt *Philander*; for though I impute unreaſonable and extravagant Raptures to Fancy rather than to Faith, and account them rather a Diſtemper of the Body than the Devotion of the Mind: Yet I muſt tell you after all, that true and manly Religion is no cold and comfortleſs thing, it is not a lukewarm Notionality, not a formal and bayardly round of Duties, not a dull *temperamentum ad pondus*, as they call it, but is lively, vigorous and ſparkling, and hath its Joys and Raviſhments too; only they are more ſedate and governable, as well as more rational and accountable, than thoſe we ſpake of before; and ſo I ſuppoſe you will find it to be with *Philander*: He hath expreſs'd ſome heat, but not without light, and is both able to govern his Expreſſions, and to give a ſober Reaſon of them.

Phil. Hearty Thanks, dear *Sebaſtian*, for vindicating me from the Miſ-apprehenſions my innocent Joy had expoſed me to with *Biophilus*; and herein you have not only done me a Kindeſs, but obliged all good Men, and done a Right to true Piety itſelf, which is apt to be put out of Countenance with the Imputation of Fanaticiſm, and ſo far it ſuffers thereby, that a great many well-diſpoſed (but over baſhful and timorous) Men are tempted to a very ſtrange kind of Hypocriſie, and to pretend themſelves worſe than they are, and to trim it off in the indifferent ſtrain of the World, for fear of incurring the Cenſure of being Zealots and Bigots in Religion.

The true grounds of Comfort in Religion.

But now I ſhall take heart and adventure to let my Light ſhine

ſhine out abroad, as well as burn within my Breaſt. And I cannot forbear upon this occaſion to return my moſt humble Thanks to God Almighty, who hath given me cauſe to hope in his Goodneſs, and the Cordial of that Hope hath in ſome meaſure antidoted me againſt the Troubles and Vexations of this preſent World; for I profeſs to you, there is ſo much of Care and Fear, of Labour and Pain, of Sorrow and Diſquiet here below, what by croſs Accidents and Diſappointments, what by the Malice of evil Men, or by the Follies, Peeviſhneſs, and Jealouſies of weak and ſilly Men, that were it not for the proſpect of a better State of things above, and of Reſt and Peace, Stability and Satisfaction in another World, I ſhould be very far from being fond of this preſent Life. But now when I conſider and am ſatisfied, that at the worſt I am under a Providence, ſo that nothing befals by Chance, or by the mere Will of Man, but by divine Appointment and Ordination; and conſequently there is nothing but what he both can and will make to work for Good in the Concluſion: And when withal I find myſelf reſolved to ſubmit to his wiſe Purpoſes, by which means it is in my Power to be wiſer and better by all Occurrences; and in ſo doing, have my Hopes improved into ſome meaſure of Aſſurance, that I ſhall in due time be tranſlated into thoſe happy Regions above: This comforts my Heart under all the preſent Inconveniencies, and not only ſupports my Spirits, but chears them, and refreſhes my very Countenance. And ſometimes it happens, that the more the Vexations of the World had depreſs'd me, the higher do theſe Contemplations raiſe me; ſo that I break out into ſuch an holy Triumph and Bravery, as that which you *(Biophilus)* took notice of in me ſince we came together.]

Sebaſt. What think you now, *Biophilus?* Is *Philander* mad or drunk?

Bioph. No, I acknowledge he ſpeaks like a Man, or an Angel rather, (if there were any ſuch thing) but ſtill I ſuſpect there is ſome Trick or other in it; I cannot ſatisfy my ſelf in theſe religious Braveries, as he calls them.

Sebaſt. Why, *Biophilus*, what is there to amuſe you in this Matter? Conſider with your ſelf, how can it be otherwiſe, but that he who is throughly ſatisfy'd that it is neither blind Chance, nor ſurly Fate, nor ſome ill-natur'd and unlucky Being; but contrariwiſe, a great, and wiſe, and good God, that governs the World: How can it be (I ſay) but that ſuch a Man muſt needs be very comfortable under ſuch a Protection?

Or how can it come to paſs that a Man that lives virtuouſly and piouſly, who approves himſelf to his own Reaſon and Conſcience, and, as near as he can, to the Mind of that great God, who made and governs the World, ſhould be tormented with panick Fears of he knows not what; ſince, whether he looks upward or downward, into himſelf or abroad; there is nothing can hurt him: Nothing but what muſt needs chear him with an hopeful Expectation of a good Iſſue of ſuch a Courſe in the upſhot of things; eſpecially if withal he have a firm Belief of eternal Life in another World, and of unſpeakable Joy and Felicity there attainable, and certainly to be enjoyed by him that purſues it in his Life by ſuch a Courſe of Virtue and Piety as aforeſaid. How can you imagine that ſuch a Man ſhould be down in the Mouth, (as we ſay) or dull and out of Humour? Nay, rather, how is it poſſible he ſhould be able to ſmother ſuch Hopes, and conceal ſuch Joys? No, they are too great

The admirable and unſpeakable Conſolation of believing eternal Life.

great to be kept ſecret in his Boſom; they will break out now and then in triumphant Expreſſions.

Eternity, *Biophilus*, (eternal Life I mean) is ſo great, ſo glorious, ſo admirable an Happineſs, that I can never be perſuaded that Man really believes it, and hath any good Meaſure of Hopes that he ſhall attain it, who can be ſo reſerved and ſtoical, as to keep his Countenance whenever he thinks of it.

Do but judge with your ſelf, if you could have Ground to believe you ſhould never forgo this preſent Life, but for ever enjoy your Houſe, your Wife and Children, nor ever be parted from thoſe wiſe and good Friends you have made choice of; that no Accident, no Diſeaſe, nor Malice of Men or evil Spirits could reach you; but you might purſue your Deſigns, and meet with nothing to interrupt the Train of your Thoughts and Projections, ſo that you could know Death only in Speculation; in this Caſe you may eaſily imagine how much at Eaſe a Man's Thoughts would be, how ſecure his Mind, how bold his Spirit, and how chearful his Countenance. But now to live for ever in the Glories of the Kingdom of Heaven, to be not only ſecure from all Pain or Care, Fear or Danger, but to be in the Poſſeſſion of perfect and conſummate Bliſs, to enjoy the Favour of God, the Preſence of the ever-bleſſed *Jeſus*, and the perpetual Society of all good Men made perfect and free from their Ignorances, Errors, Paſſions and Infirmities: This is a State of Life that I proteſt I cannot think of without Aſtoniſhment, nor ſpeak of without a Paſſion, nor hope for without a Rapture.

Bioph. I ſhall eaſily conſent to you in all this, *Sebaſtian*, if I thought it was real; for I am neither ſo fond of a Grave, as not to be deſirous to

live as long as it is poſſible, nor ſo ſevere to my ſelf, as to be willing to want any of thoſe Comforts of Life and Supports in Death that are attainable; but in truth I ſuſpect all theſe great things, *Philander*, that you talk of, to be but pleaſant Dreams, and the high Rants of Fancy.

Sebaſt. But why ſhould you think ſo, *Biophilus*, ſeeing it is very plain, that the ſobereſt and beſt Men are of this Perſuaſion; and for the moſt part, the better the Men are, the more lively is their Senſe of theſe things. Can you imagine that either God almighty ſhould put a Cheat upon the very beſt of Mankind (and upon them eſpecially?) or can you think, that the beſt of Men ſhould be the greateſt Liars, and pretend to that of which they had no real Grounds? I pray therefore be free with me, and tell me the Cauſes of your Miſtruſt in this Caſe.

Bioph. I think I have Reaſon to doubt theſe high Pretences to the wonderful Comforts of Religion, in the firſt place, becauſe I obſerve the ſtate of Mankind to he generally very uneaſie, and the World to be full of nothing more than Melancholy and Complaint; which ſure could not be, if there were ſuch effectual Remedies ready at hand, and ſuch an Hearts-eaſe in Religion.

Sebaſt. I will anſwer you in that preſently, but I pray firſt tell me (by the way) what do you think is the Reaſon that there are ſo many ſickly and valetudinary People in the World?

Bioph. Truly I think we may reſolve the greateſt Part of thoſe long and tedious Diſtempers, under which ſo many People languiſh, into Surfeits and other Inſtances of their own Riot and Luxury.

Sebaſt. Very well, but you do not yet reach my meaning; I ask you therefore again, do you not think that there are a great many amongſt thoſe

that

that pine away under the aforeſaid lingring Diſtempers, who might poſſibly receive Help and Eaſe, if they took due Care of themſelves.

Bioph. Yes doubtleſs, for in thoſe chronical Diſeaſes there is time for Advice and Application, and fit Intermiſſions for Medicines to take place in; but the Miſchief is, ſome Men are humourſome and obſtinate, and will take no Advice whatever comes of it: Others deliver themſelves up to Empiricks and unskilful Perſons, who often make the Diſeaſe worſe than it was; and then there are ſome ſo ſoft and delicate, that altho' they have good Advice given them, and might be cured, yet will not follow the Rules that are preſcribed to them.

Sebaſt. Very good, now you have ſaved me the Labour, and have anſwered your own Objection againſt the real Comfortableneſs of Religion: For there are the ſame three Accounts to be aſſigned of the Uncomfortableneſs of Men's Spirits, which you have given of the ſickly Eſtate of their Bodies, *viz.*

The Cauſes of the Uncomfortableneſs of Men's Spirits generally.

In the firſt place there are ſome Men who fanſy themſelves either too wiſe to be adviſed, or think the Caſe of humane Nature too deſperate to be cured; and therefore grow moroſe and ſceptical, and will rather cloak themſelves up in a muſty melancholy Reſervedneſs for the preſent, and run the venture of all for the future, than give themſelves the Trouble of any ſerious Thoughts of Religion. Now you cannot expect that theſe Men ſhould find the Comfort of Religion, who were ſo far from making Experiment of it, that they were afraid of it, like thoſe wiſe Men that for fear they ſhould one time or other be poiſoned, will therefore never eat any Meat.

Bioph. If you would pardon my interrupting of you

you, I could tell you for all this, that there are ſome certain Men in the World (though not many I confeſs) who enjoy themſelves very well, and yet never were in Debt to any Religion for it.

Sebaſt. Very likely, *Biophilus*, for ſo (as I remember) King *John* killed a very fat Stag that had never heard Maſs in its Life; and ſo you ſhall ſee an Ox in the Stall, let him but have Meat and Drink, and Eaſe enough, he never repines at the Approach of the Day of Slaughter: In like manner there are a Sort of dull unthinking Men that paſs away their time in a pleaſant Dream of Senſuality, and never feel any want of the Conſolations of Religion; but it is not becauſe there is no need of them, but becauſe ſuch Perſons do not feel the need, nor indeed are ſenſible of any thing elſe that is manly and generous.

How it comes to paſs that ſome Men ſeem to live chearfully without God and Religion.

If I ſhould tell you it was dangerous being upon ſuch a Precipice, I ſuppoſe you would not think it a Confutation of my Caution to tell me, that notwithſtanding a certain blind Man ſlept and ſnored ſecurely upon it; for real Danger is Danger, whether Men be apprehenſive of it or no: Or if you ſhall obſerve a poor Man to dream of Plenty, and all the Affluence of the World, you will not count him to be as happy as he that really enjoys thoſe things; a Dream is one thing, and real Felicity is another: And though the former fanſies himſelf for the preſent as happy as the other, yet I am ſure you who know one is aſleep and the other awake, do not think it to be ſo. Thus it is in Religion.

Bioph. Your Pardon again; it is not only true that ſome ſtupid and incapable Perſons are at Hearts-eaſe without Religion, but you ſhall obſerve

ſerve ſome of a better Mould, polite and ingenious Men, live very pleaſantly, and yet are not beholden to Religion for it.

Sebaſt. It may be ſo; but then I doubt they muſt be beholden to the Bottle for it, which they muſt ply continually too, to keep them from thinking; for I have ſhewed you already, that it is as impoſſible for a thinking Man (out of a Debauch, and who cannot but be ſenſible that he muſt die) to be comfortable without the Aids of ſome Religion or other; as it is for you or me to caper and frolick upon the Brink of ſuch a Precipice as we ſpoke of but now. In ſhort, ſuch Men as have Eyes in their Heads have no other Refuge but to wink hard, that they may not be ſenſible of their Danger.

And ſo much for that: Now if you pleaſe I will proceed. In the ſecond Place then there is (as you well obſerved) another Sort of Men, who though they are not ſo refractory and contumacious as to defy the whole Art of Phyſick, (as a perfect Cheat) yet out of Stingineſs or ſome other Folly, will apply themſelves only to Quacks and Mountebanks, who inſtead of curing the preſent Infirmities, by unskilful Management render them more dangerous and intolerable. So it is in this Caſe of Religion and the Minds of Men, there are thoſe who do not abandon themſelves to deſperate Atheiſm, nor ſceptically caſt off all Care of Religion, but finding they cannot be at Eaſe without ſome Regard of God, and Proviſion for another World; yet (not falling into the Hands of thoſe that were able to principle them right) entertain ſuch imperfect and inconſiſtent Notions of Religion, as can really afford them no ſolid Conſolation. And this is a ſecond Cauſe why the World is ſo uncomfortable, notwithſtanding all the Relief that Religion pretends to give.

As for Example: Suppoſe a Man believes there

is

False Notions of God and Religion very uncomfortable

is a God, yet if he look upon him under the Notion of a cruel and unrelenting Tyrant, governed by mere Will, and who aims at nothing but the ſecuring and greatening his own Power, and conſequently is ſo far unconcerned for any of his Creatures, that it is all one to him whether they be ſaved or damned eternally; you will eaſily grant me, that the Belief of ſuch a God cannot be very comfortable, ſince a Man cannot think of him, nor much leſs exerciſe any Act of Devotion towards him without Horrour and Affrightment.

Or again, ſuppoſe a Man ſhould entertain a leſs horrid Notion of God, as that though he be not ſuch a Monſter as the former render'd him, yet that he is a nice and captious Deity, very teachy and hard to pleaſe, that would make no candid and equitable Interpretation, nor allow of Sincerity and good Meaning, but muſt have his Mind to a tittle, and every thing muſt be done preciſely according to Rule; and conſequently muſt needs be able to find frequent Occaſions againſt his Creatures, and was likely as often to animadvert ſeverely upon them: This muſt needs be a very uncomfortable Principle of Religion as well as the former, ſince ſuch a God is only the Object of Fear, and not of Love, and *all Fear hath Torment*, 1 John 4. 18.

Moreover, put Caſe a Man ſhould have a more kindly and benign Notion of God, than either of the former, but yet finds himſelf perfectly at a Loſs how to pleaſe the divine Majeſty, and propitiate him towards himſelf; in regard he knows of no Declaration of his Mind and Will that he hath made, (becauſe he either never heard of, or doth not believe the holy Scriptures) it is impoſſible but that a devout Mind in this Caſe muſt be very

ry much perplexed and uneasy; and the more devout the Man is, the more will his Perplexity be, in regard that when he hath done all he can to please God, he cannot rest satisfied, whether he hath served or disserved him all the while; which in a great measure was the Condition of the Gentile World, for lack of divine Revelation; and therefore they were necessitated in their Devotions to make use of abundance of various Rites, in hopes that if one sort of them missed, the other might hit to be acceptable to the Deity. And when all was done, they were not sure that either, or any of them, was perfectly agreeable to his Mind: And therefore as their Devotion must needs be superstitious in the Nature of it; so consequently it must be attended with panick Fears and uncomfortable Apprehensions as the Fruit of it.

Farthermore, let us suppose a Man of so high an Attainment in Religion as that he had some Intimations of the divine Will, as to Matter of Fact, but yet was under a Dispensation of Religion, which (at least in the Letter of it) consisted mainly of sundry nice and curious Observances; such as the abstaining from such or such Meats; the performing such or such Rites and Ceremonies; of none of which he could give himself any rational Account, or be conscious of any other Obligation to them, but only, this is commanded, and thus it must be (which was the Case of the superstitious *Jews*, as it is also of a Sort of degenerate and judaizing Christians) now it is plain that this State of Religion must needs be very uncomfortable also; because a Man must of Necessity drag on very heavily where his Reason doth not go before him, and his Judgment is not convinced of the Goodness and Excellency of those Observances, as well as of the Necessity of them.

Lastly, If a Man was under a Religion which could

could give him no Aſſurance of any Reward of his Devotion; but that for ought he knew he might at laſt have only his Labour for his Pain: Foraſmuch as there was no Way to aſſure him whether it ſhould be his Portion to rot for ever in the Grave, or whether after Death he ſhould be transformed into ſome other Creature; or that tho' the Name and Memory of his good Actions ſhould remain, yet his particular Perſon was to be ſwallowed up into the Womb of general Nature, and he for ever loſt (ſuch as which were the utmoſt Hopes of the Generality of the blind *Pagans.)*

Now, I ſay, ſuch Principles of Religion as this, or any of the aforementioned, muſt needs be very uncomfortable, but all theſe, *Biophilus*, are as manifeſtly falſe, as they are ſadly melancholy, and therefore it is not any Defect in Religion that the Spirits of Men are uncomfortable, but the Default of thoſe bad Notions they have taken up, inſtead of the true Principles of Religion. And ſo much for that ſecond Sort of Men.

Bioph. I am wonderfully pleaſed with this laſt Diſcourſe of yours, in which you have not more demonſtrated the Uncomfortableneſs, than expoſed the Nonſenſe and Abſurdity of a great Number of Religioniſts; and therefore ſo far I thank you. But then again, I muſt tell you, upon due Conſideration, it makes as much againſt your ſelf as any of them, ſo far as concerns the Point in Hand between us. For after all that can be ſaid, it is undeniable, that ſome Men of very different Perſuaſions, are as chearful in their ſeveral and reſpective Ways one as the other: Now foraſmuch as theſe cannot all be true, in regard they contradict each other, doth it not therefore follow from hence, that the Comfortableneſs of Men's Spirits doth not depend merely upon Religion, but upon ſomething elſe?

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. In truth you follow me very cloſe, yet I have two or three things to ſay, which I do not doubt will acquit me in what I have ſaid, and I hope may ſatisfy you. Firſt, it is to be conſidered, that a Man may be ſound in his Principles of Religion, and right for the main, who yet may differ from other Men, and perhaps from the Truth too, ſo much as to make him be reputed of a different Religion; yet notwithſtanding thoſe great Principles which he is ſound in, and that honeſt Zeal he ſhews in the Proſecution of them, will procure him Acceptance with God, and enable him to live very comfortably; for fervent Devotion will cover a Multitude of Errors, as well *as Charity doth a Multitude of Sins*. And this is to be hoped is the Condition of a great many well-meaning, but deluded People.

The Cauſes of the Comfortableneſs of ſome miſtaken Religions.

Again, Secondly, It is obſervable in this Caſe, that many warm themſelves *by Sparks of their own kindling*, and are heated more by their own Motion than by the Grounds and Cauſes of it: Zeal naturally warms the Blood, and whatſoever warms in ſome meaſure comforts too; inſomuch that ſome Men of very raſcally Opinions, and ſuch as in the Conſequences of them tend towards Hell, are yet raiſed up towards Heaven by the Power of an active and heated Fancy.

But, after all, you muſt remember (what I ſaid before) that Truth is Truth, and Dream is Dream; my meaning is, the Man of a mighty Zeal in his way, may ſeem to himſelf happy, (whatever his Principles be) but it is only the Man of ſound Principles of Religion, that can be truly, and underſtandingly, and conſtantly comfortable.

And now I ſuppoſe I may come to the third and laſt ſort of Men which diſparage Religion (juſt as

an unruly Patient discredits his Physician) namely, those who tho' they have right notions of Religion, yet live carelessly, and are by no means answerable to their Principles in the Conduct of their Lives.

A wicked Life cannot be comfortable, if a Man's Religion be never so good.

Now it can be no wonder, nor any slander to Religion, that such Men who live wickedly should be uncomfortable in their Spirits. For we may as well expect, this cold Weather, to warm our selves by a Glow-worm, or a painted Fire, as that any Man's Heart should be truly chearful by the Advantage of a Religion which consisted only in Notion, and was not vigorously practised. Nay, it would be a wonder indeed if such a Man should not be sadly melancholy, lying continually under the lashes of his own Conscience, for contradicting the very Principles of his own Mind. And this is so far from reflecting any Dishonour upon Religion, that it is a mighty Vindication of the Truth and Power of it, when a Man's own Heart shall revenge upon him his Contempt of her Dictates and Sentiments; and certainly the better and more generous a Man's Principles are, (which he in this manner violates by a lewd Life) so much more sharp will be the stings of Conscience, and the uneasiness of his Condition.

But now, take a Man who to right Principles in his mind joins a conformable holy Life, and (as there is all the reason the World for it, so) it is a thousand to one in experience, but he lives comfortably. And thus I think I have fully acquitted my self of your prime Objection against the Comfortableness of Religion.

Bioph. I confess, *Sebastian*, you have spoke a great deal of Reason, but yet perhaps you are not so clearly come off as you may imagine for I have still to object, that many Men of your Principles, and

and who (as it ſeems) in conſequence of them, carry it ſometimes with full ſail of Joy and Courage, yet at other times are not able to maintain this tide, but flag, and are as much down by fits as other Men; nay, do you not obſerve that there are Men in the World, whoſe Principles I know you will allow, and withal whoſe Lives you cannot blame, and yet theſe very Men ſhall be remarkably uncomfortable, and no Men fuller of Complaints and more uneaſie than they. Therefore it ſeems Religion is neither ſuch a ſtable Principle of Comfort, nor ſuch a *Panacea*, ſuch a general Remedy of the Troubles of humane Life, as is pretended: If you can reconcile this with your former Aſſertions, I think I ſhall then be forced to yield you the Cauſe.

How it may happen that pious Men may be uncomfortable.

Sebaſt. It is true which you obſerve, That ſometimes thoſe that ſeem to have all the Advantages of Religion, are notwithſtanding uncomfortable under them, and yet this may be no impeachment either of the Truth, or of the Efficacy of thoſe Principles. For this which you ſpeak of may come to paſs upon ſeveral other accounts, as, namely,

In the firſt place, it may be that he, in whoſe whole courſe of Life we can obſerve no blemiſh, may notwithſtanding be juſtly charged by his own Conſcience for ſeveral ſuch Miſcarriages as may well make him uneaſie till he hath made his Peace with God and himſelf again, by hearty Repentance and Reformation. Now you muſt not impute this to the Defect of Conſolation in the Principles of Religion, but to the Man's own Defect of Piety. For whenſoever we ſee a Man troubled for violating the Rules of his Religion, we have a kind of ſenſible Experiment of the great

reality and mighty Power of it; and this may happen, tho' you see not the Causes of it.

Again, It may be the Person who now lives very virtuously, and consequently might live comfortably upon the Principles of Religion, hath formerly been a great Sinner: And now, though his Repentance hath made his Peace with God, and so there is nothing justly to interrupt his Comfort; yet as often as he reflects upon the heinousness of his former Miscarriages, no wonder if the Briskness of his Spirit be abated, if it be but by the Consideration of the danger he hath escaped.

Again, it may happen that he who is not indeed conscious to himself of any Guilt which should deject his Confidence towards God, yet by the malicious Artifice of the great Enemy of Mankind, may have such black and frightful fancies raised in his head, as may very much discompose him for the present, till by Prayer and Application to the Grace of God he overcomes them.

Moreover sometimes, when all is well within, and a Man's own Heart doth not accuse him, yet it may happen that outward Afflictions may be so vexatious, so sharp and pinching to him, that for a time even a good Man's Spirits may be disorder'd by them, till he recollect himself, *and* Sampson *like, shake off those Philistins that are upon him*; I mean, until he rally the forces of his Reason, or rather till by Faith he take Sanctuary in the impregnable Fortress of Conscience and Religion, and there he securely weathers out the Storm, and all becomes quickly serene and calm again.

But after all that is or can be said, allowance must still be made for an unhappy temper of Body; for it must be remember'd, that Religion is an Medicine for the Soul or Mind, and not for bodily Diseases. You know the intimate correspondence

ſpondence and quick ſympathy between thoſe two Inmates, Soul and Body, which is ſuch, that like *Hypocrates*'s Twins, they mutually affect one another, ſo that one of them cannot well enjoy it ſelf, if the other be in diſorder. Do but conſider how exceeding difficult it is to maintain the rate of a Man's common Converſation, and eſpecially to bear up to any meaſure of brisk Airyneſs, when the Body is but a little ſickly and diſcompoſed. And then how can you imagine but that there will be an unevenneſs of Temper in a melancholy Man's Deportment, notwithſtanding that the Comforts of Religion ſhould be as ſolid and ſtable as I have repreſented them to be?

Bioph. But by your leave, Sir, I underſtood you that there was ſuch a Catholick and Paramount Antidote of all Sorrow to be found in Religion, that your pious Man could never have been ſad any more (like the Chimæra of a wiſe Man amongſt the Stoicks) neither outward Accidents could diſcompoſe him, nor bodily Infirmities interrupt his tranquillity and ſelf-enjoyments.

Sebaſt. Sure, *Biophilus*, you did not think I took every good Man to become a God Almighty, or the powers of Religion to be ſo omnipotent, as that becauſe they can recreate a Man's Spirits, they ſhould therefore alſo make him intirely another Creature. You might as well imagine I aſſerted that this ſpiritual Remedy ſhould preſerve Men from dying, as from being ſick or melancholy, when their Conſtitution is prone to it. For although by reaſon of the near relation between Soul and Body, (as I ſaid before) it is not to be doubted, but that the Comforts of the Mind upon account of Religion, may, in a good meaſure, chear the bodily Spirits; yet on the other ſide, it

The unhappy influence of a melancholy Body upon the Mind.

is to be expected that the Body will have its influence reciprocally; and when it is infirm, will depreſs and clog the Mind that it ſhall be ſure to be ſenſible of the Burthen, and be able to move the leſs briskly in its courſe. In ſhort, the buſineſs between the Soul and Body ſtands thus; namely, as on the one hand, the Body can effect the Mind ſo far as to retard its motion, and check its flight; but not ſo as altogether to oppoſe and hinder them: So, on the other hand, the Mind (if that be comfortable) comforts and refreſhes the bodily Spirits, but is not able entirely to alter them: For Temper will be Temper, and Melancholy will be Melancholy ſtill.

That therefore which I aſſert and have hitherto endeavoured to prove, and that which the common experience of pious Men atteſts, is no more but this, That there are never-failing Springs of Conſolation in Religion, provided the iſſues of them be not obſtructed by ſome or other of the aforeſaid occaſions.

Phil. I know, *Sebaſtian*, you have well conſidered all that which you have ſaid, and I thank God I have ſome experience of the truth of it for the moſt part; and therefore have reaſon to rely upon your Judgment for the reſt. But yet there is one thing runs in my Thoughts, concerning which I would gladly ask your Opinion, if I do not unſeaſonably interrupt your Diſcourſe with *Biophilus*.

Sebaſt. You will not interrupt me, *Philander*, for I was at a full period; or if it was otherwiſe, we would make a Parentheſis for your Satisfaction: What is it therefore wherein I can ſerve you?

Phil. The matter, in ſhort then, is this: I have obſerved ſeveral Divines, amongſt the cauſes of Perplexity and Uncomfortableneſs of good Men, to reckon one, of which you have hitherto taken

no notice; namely, *the caſe of Deſertion*, which they define to be "When God "withdraws himſelf arbitrarily "from ſuch Perſons for a time, "and hides his Face from them "upon the ſole account of his "Prerogative, or for ſome rea-"ſon beſt known to himſelf, but without the "leaſt Guilt or Provocation on their parts. Now if this be true, it may then not only happen that the very beſt, and alſo the moſt ſanguine and chearful Men naturally may be very uncomfortable; but the very ſtate of ſpiritual Comfort will be very uncertain and fluctuating; and which is worſt of all, there will be a Diſeaſe without a Remedy, a Caſe that admits of no Conſolation. For what can all Counſels and Diſcourſes, or all the Exerciſes of Faith or Reaſon avail againſt a peremptory Act of God?

The unreaſonableneſs of a commonly receiv'd Opinion concerning God's deſerting of good Men.

Sebaſt. It is very true, *Philander*, as you obſerve, there hath been ſuch a Notion broached, and the effects and conſequences have been bad enough; for beſides what you have well alledged, under the pretence hereof, ſome have been ſo abuſed as to indulge their own Humour, and, as *Jonas* ſaid, *he did well to be angry*, ſo they fancy they ought to be Melancholy, when God (as they imagine) ſets himſelf againſt them, and they thereby are tempted to think hardly of the Divine Majeſty, as if he was a great Tyrant, who took pleaſure in the Complaints of his Creatures; and which is worſe than that (if worſe can be) ſometimes evil Men get this Notion by the end, and then whenſoever their wicked Lives render their Conſciences uneaſy to them, they preſently conceit it may be only the withdrawing of the divine Favour from them, and how can

The abſurd conſequences of that Opinion.

they help it, ſince it is the caſe of good Men to be ſo dealt with?

The groundleſneſs of the aforeſaid Opinion.

But what ground there is for all this I cannot imagine. It is true, we ought not to diſpute the divine Prerogative, or what he may do if he pleaſes. For we find it dangerous to take upon us to limit the Prerogative of earthly Princes; and if they may have reaſons for ſuch things as we do not underſtand, much more hath God, whoſe Wiſdom is infinite and unſearchable: Therefore not to define what God may or may not do, it is plain that there is no Foundation in holy Scripture (which is the Declaration of his Will) to think he will take ſuch a Courſe as this Caſe ſuppoſes; and beſides, it ſeems inconſiſtent with his Sincerity and Goodneſs, and can by no means be reconciled with that ſettled and immoveable Delight he declares himſelf to take in good Men, that he ſhould play faſt and looſe with them, or (as ſome have rudely expreſs'd it) play at bo-peep with his Children.

No, *Philander*, aſſure your ſelf, infinite Goodneſs will not diſguiſe it ſelf, and put on a frightful Vizard merely to ſcare his weak and timorous Children; ſo far from it, that contrariwiſe ſo long as Men continue conſtant, loyal and dutiful towards him, he will be unchangeable in his Favour, and conſtantly ſhine out upon them in the bright Beams of Love and Kindneſs. And if it ſhall happen that (as I granted to *Biophilus*) the melancholy of Mens Conſtitution ſhall riſe up in ſuch black fumes, as not only to cloud their Minds, but that (conſequently thereof) they may entertain diſmal Apprehenſions of him; yet againſt all this he is ready to relieve them by his Providence, and to aſſiſt and comfort them by his Holy Spirit, if he be devoutly apply'd to: But to be ſure he will never

never exaſperate the Condition of a ſincerely good Man by any unprovoked Act of his own. He hath told us, *He will not break a bruiſed reed, nor quench ſmoaking flax*, Matth. xii. 20. And that *if Men draw nigh to him, he will draw nigh to them*, James iv. 8. and he neither needs it, nor is inclin'd to try Experiments upon poor melancholy Men. Let us have a care therefore of charging the effects of our own changeable humour (either of Body or Mind) upon the unchangeable God. For ſo long as we walk by the light of his Word, we may live under the light of his Countenance, if (at leaſt) our own Melancholy interpoſe not, and eclipſe it to us: And (bating outward Troubles) we may upon thoſe terms, in a good meaſure enjoy Heaven upon Earth; we may be as bold as Lyons, as chearful as Angels; in a word, as full of Joy as our Hearts can hold: For the Principles of Religion will bear all this out, and God will never interrupt the efficacy of them.

Phil. Oh bleſſed! for ever bleſſed be the divine Goodneſs, and God's Bleſſing on your Heart, *Sebaſtian*, for the good report and aſſurance you have given us of it. And now, Friends, why ſhould not we be very good, that we may be thus comfortable? And why ſhould we not be comfortable if we be good? Why ſhould the jolly Fellows out-do us, whoſe Hearts are filled with froth, and their Heads with ſteam, and we who (if we be as we pretend to be) have God, and Conſcience, and Heaven on our ſides, hang down our Heads and Hands, and by ſo doing reproach our God, our Religion, and our ſelves too?

An holy Triumph in Contemplation of the comfort of true Religion.

Have not we ſuch Notions of a God, as render him a juſt and a *faithful Creator*, a wiſe and benign Being, that is tender of and exorable towards

his Creatures: How then can we chuſe but love him, and delight in him?

Hath not his Divine Majeſty made his Mind ſo well known to us, that we cannot be to ſeek what will pleaſe him, but may go on chearfully in the courſe of our Duty without Diſtruſt or Scruple? And can we doubt his Conſtancy to himſelf, and to that Declaration he hath made of his Will, that we ſhould ſuſpect the end if we uſe the means; ſince we may read our own deſtiny beforehand, and anticipate the Sentence of the great Day of Judgment? Are not all his Laws ſo juſt and rational, that they agree with the very ſenſe of our own Mind, ſo that *his Service is perfect Freedom*? Foraſmuch as in a very proper ſence we are governed by our own Laws, thoſe of the Goſpel being enacted in our own Conſciences.

And are we not ſatisfied that we ſhall be ſo far from loſing our labour in Religion, that we have the fulleſt aſſurance (ſuch a thing is capable of) that in reward of faithful ſerving God in this Life, we ſhall after Death be raiſed up again, and live for ever and ever with him in his Kingdom of Heaven? Surely all this together is ſufficient to make us fervent and hearty in the exerciſe of Religion, and comfortable in our Spirits when we have ſo done.

Sebaſt. Bravely reſolved, *Philander*, this pace (if you hold it) will bring you to *Urania* preſently. But I will bear you Company if I can, and therefore I add to what you have ſaid, Why ſhould we be afraid to be alone, or in the dark, ſince we believe God is every where, and in the greateſt ſolitude will afford us the comfortable effects of his Preſence and Providence? Or why ſhould we be under dreadful Apprehenſions of the Power and malicious enterprizes of evil Spirits upon us, ſeeing we are convinced *that greater is he that is with us, than he that is in the World?*

Why

Why ſhould we be dejected at worldly Loſſes, or Miſcarriages in our temporal Affairs, when we know that *in Heaven we have a more enduring Subſtance?*

Why ſhould we be diſmay'd at the infliction of any Pain or Torture upon our Bodies, either by the Hand of God in a violent Diſeaſe, or by the cruelty of Men that hate and perſecute us: Since God hath promiſed *that no temptation ſhall overtake us, but what we ſhall be able to bear?* That is, he both can, and will either abate the Torments, or ſupport us under them.

In a word, what need we be afraid of Death it ſelf, ſince *it cannot kill the Soul*, and is no more but only a dark Paſſage to a Kingdom of Light and Glory——

Bioph. You talk bravely, Gentlemen, but I proteſt I am amazed at you, for to this very day I never looked upon Religion as any other than an auſtere and melancholy courſe of Life, and the moſt undeſirable thing in the whole World.

Phil. For God's ſake then, *Biophilus*, what is comfortable if Religion be melancholy? Is the World ſo very comfortable, when you know it is full of nothing but Care and Folly, Vexation and Diſappointment? Is Sin ſo comfortable, which (after the Commiſſion of it) perpetually dogs a Man with Guilt, and ordinarily blemiſhes his Credit, diſorders his Fortunes, impairs his Health, and cows and debaſes his Spirit? Or is Death ſo comfortable a thing, which repreſents to a Man nothing but an horrible Pit of Darkneſs and the Land of Oblivion.

If Religion be not comfortable nothing is, and Mankind is a ſad and deplorable Creature.

What (I ſay) then can be comfortable, if that be not ſo, which is the only Remedy againſt all the former?

former? For it is plain that nothing but the Hopes of another and better World at laſt can enable a Man to enjoy himſelf tolerably in this preſent: Nothing but living virtuouſly for the time to come can repair the Miſchiefs of Sins formerly committed; and nothing but eternal Life is a ſufficient Antidote againſt the Fears of Death: And all theſe are the Effects and Benefits of Religion. Therefore if this be uncomfortable, Mankind muſt needs be the moſt deplorably unhappy kind of Being in the whole World. For tho' other Creatures are in ſome ſort Fellow-ſufferers in the common Calamity of this World; yet beſides that their Share is ordinarily not ſo great as his, it is evident that they fear nothing for the future, but only feel the preſent Evil, and they have no Reſtraint upon them from what they deſire, nor no Remorſe for what they have done; therefore if Mankind have not the Glory of his Conſcience when he doth well, to ſet againſt the Checks and Girds of it when he doth amiſs; and if he have not Hopes to counterbalance his Fears, and a Reward hereafter for his Self-denial at preſent, his Condition is far the worſt of any Creature in the World. Therefore, as I ſaid, Religion is his peculiar Concern and ſingular Advantage, as that which only can repair all his Misfortunes.

Sebaſt. But I pray, *Biophilus*, what do you apprehend in Religion, that can make it look ſo melancholy to you? Is it becauſe it ſets a God before you, than which nothing can be more deſirable? For *God is Love*, is *rich in Goodneſs*, nay Goodneſs it ſelf; inſomuch that if it were poſſible any thing in the Univerſe ſhould be more good than he, that would be God. He made Man, preſerves him, loves him, delights in him, deſigns him to live eternally with himſelf. In a Word, all imaginable Comfort

Comfort is ſo wrapp'd up in this one Word *God*, that I remember a brave Heathen ſaid, *He would not be willing to live a Day in the World, if he thought there was not a God in it.* M. Antoninus.

It may be, you will ſay, this God is juſt and holy, and jealous of his Honour, and will revenge himſelf upon ſtubborn and incorrigible Sinners; all this is true, but what need you be one of thoſe that provoke him; and then, the juſter and holier he is, the better and more comfortable it is for you; or if you have offended him heretofore, yet if you repent and turn to him, he is ſo exorable and pitiful, that no tender Parent hath more yearning Bowels, or more open Arms to receive his prodigal and loſt Son, returning home to him, than God hath towards penitent Sinners.

The great Truths of Religion vindicated from the Imputation of Uncomfortableneſs.

Will you object the Self-denials required by Religion, as that a Man muſt reſtrain himſelf, for God's Sake, of many things that are pleaſant to Fleſh and Blood? It is true there are ſuch things required, but they are not ſo many as that a Man may not live very pleaſantly notwithſtanding; and if they were more than they are, who would not comply with them to obtain the Favour of ſuch a God, and to gain eternal Life upon thoſe Terms?

I am ſure you cannot object againſt the direct and poſitive Duties of Religion, ſuch as Prayers and Praiſes to God, reading and meditating on his Word, or Acts of Beneficence and Charity towards Mankind; for there is nothing more pleaſant and entertaining, nothing more delicious than theſe, if they be rightly underſtood. So that in ſhort, it is no better than a mere Slander to call Religion uncomfortable, and ſuch as could proceed from nothing

nothing but the Devil himſelf; or if from Men, it muſt be ſuch as had never try'd it, nor were reſolved ever to do ſo.

Bioph. You muſt pardon me, Gentlemen, I tell you plainly I never felt any of theſe Comforts of Religion which you ſpeak of.

Phil. Ay, there's the Buſineſs, now you have ſaid all, here lies the Bottom of all the ſcandalous Reports of Religion, as if it was a ſowre, melancholy thing. Try it, *Biophilus*, and you will quickly confute your ſelf, Experience will do it for you: You uſed to ſay ſeeing is believing; now in God's Name make Experiment, *Taſte and ſee how good the Lord is*; and let me tell you this for your Encouragement, there were never yet any who effectually made the Experiment and were diſappointed. A great many who ſlighted Religion for a great while, at laſt have become ſenſible of their Folly, and made their Refuge in it; but it is very rare, and next to impoſſible, to find any who in earneſt applied themſelves to it, that ever apoſtatized from it, or pretended they were diſappointed of Comfort in it.

Bioph. But, for God's ſake, what do you mean by trying? What would you have me do? I ſhould be very glad to live comfortably.

Phil. By trying we mean no more but this: You muſt apply your ſelf in earneſt to the Knowledge and Practice of Religion, the very firſt Step to which is Gravity and Seriouſneſs of Spirit. It was, I remember, the ſhort and weighty Counſel of the great *Hugo Grotius*, when he lay on his Death-bed, to ſome about him, who asked his Advice; be ſerious, ſaid he, and your Work is half done; leave off Tricks of Wit and captious Evaſions; do not pleaſe your ſelf

The true Method of experimenting the Comforts of Religion.

ſelf in a trifling Pretence to extraordinary Sagacity in finding Flaws in ſo weighty a Concern as this we ſpeak of; but be willing to believe, and then, (as I ſaid) reſolve to live up to the Convictions of your Conſcience, and you will, in due time find the Comfort of ſo doing.

You do not expect to feel the Warmth of the Fire this cold Seaſon, unleſs you draw near to it, and continue by it; no more reaſonably can you expect to feel the Comforts of Religion, till you have embraced the Doctrines, and at leaſt begun to live by the Laws of it; but when you have ſo done, from thenceforth you will begin to be ſenſible of what we have diſcourſed, and according to your Progreſs, ſuch will be the Proportion of your Comfort, and perſevering in your Courſe, you will every Day find your ſelf drawing nearer and nearer to Heaven; is it not ſo, *Sebaſtian?*

Sebaſt. True to a tittle, *Philander*, and ſo you, *Biophilus*, will find it, if you (as I hope you will) make the Experiment; for though, (as our good Friend here hath well obſerved) the Joys of Religion come in gradually, and not all at once; yet, like the riſing Sun, they are always growing higher and higher to a perfect Day of Glory, and (therein unlike to that) never more ſetting or ſhutting in upon us in a total Darkneſs again. As ſoon as you ſet your Face towards Heaven, and begin to live conſcientiouſly, you ſhall find your Mind eaſy, and your Spirits cheared with an admirable Serenity; and when in conſequence of ſuch Beginning, you worſhip God devoutly, you will find a Comfort in his Preſence, and a ſweet Senſe of him when you have finiſhed your Duty: Thence you will proceed to feel a Motion of Bravery in your Mind, to reſiſt all kind of Sin, and that will be followed with an unſpeakable Pleaſure and Glory in Victory over your Paſſions, and corrupt Inclinations,

tions, and thence forward Religion will grow eaſy and delightful to you, and you ſhall be able to look towards the other World with Hope and Deſire: And then finally the Holy Spirit will come into your Soul, and *ſeal you to the Day of Redemption*, and give you ſuch a Reliſh of the Glories above, that you ſhall deſpiſe the preſent World, and be able to look through the dark Vault of Death, and take a View of Heaven.

Biopb. Whatever the matter is, you two are able to raviſh any Man's Heart with this Diſcourſe, I am ſure you have filled me with Admiration, you have aſtoniſhed me. But I pray what Religion muſt a Man be of, that he may make this Experiment.

Sebaſt. Nay, ſure enough it muſt be the old Religion, or you will loſe your Labour. All new fangles are mere Cheats; they may ſerve Men to talk of, and make a noiſe with in the World, but they will never afford ſound Comfort in a Man's need: So far from it, that they diſtract a Man with Novelty, and fill his Head with endleſs Scrupuloſity. The Way to Peace of Conſcience and ſpiritual Joy, is not to be of ſuch an Opinion, Sect, or Party, or to be zealous of ſuch a Mode or Ceremony; but to have a firm Faith in God, to live an holy and devout Life; this is the old Religion truly ſo called, for it is as old as Goſpel itſelf, and conſequently is the try'd Way to ſolid Conſolation. But, I pray, upon this Occaſion, give me leave to ask you a bold Queſtion, what Religion are you of at preſent?

The old Religion is the only comfortable Religion.

Biopb. It is a free Queſtion, I confeſs; but (knowing whom I am amongſt) I will give you as free an Anſwer: Truly, *Sebaſtian*, I am of no Religion at all that I know of, unleſs you make me to be of one.

Phil.

Phil. Then I do not wonder that you are ſuch a Stranger to the Comforts of Religion, for it ſeems all was Romance to you (as you call'd it) but I hope, however, you do not look upon it as a modiſh Qualification, and a piece of Gallantry to be without Religion; take heed of that, good *Biophilus*, *for God will not be mocked.*

Bioph. You ſee I do not, *Philander*; but I know on the other ſide, you would not have me diſſemble and play the Hypocrite neither, and therefore I have told you the very Truth.

Phil. You do very well in both thoſe Particulars, but 'tis Pity you ſhould not find out a middle between Scepticiſm and Hypocriſy, which you have now a fair Opportunity to do; being in the Company of *Sebaſtian*, if you pleaſe to make uſe of it.

Sebaſt. In earneſt, *Biophilus*, you are one of the ſtrangeſt Men in the World, if this be true which you ſay of your ſelf; I pray give me leave to enquire how you came to be in this Condition? I am confident you have not drowned your Religion in Drink, (as ſome have done) for I take you to be a wiſer Man, and more careful of your Life and Health; and I am as confident that you have not careleſly loſt it in your Travels in foreign Countries, as ſome young Gentlemen have done. What then! hath the Hypocriſy of ſome high Pretenders (who either ridiculouſly over-acting their Parts, or lewdly proſtituting Religion to baſe and villainous Deſigns) made you aſhamed of it, or (which hath been very common in this Age) have you run a wild Round through all Opinions, till at laſt, being come about to the very Point you ſet out from, you thenceforth concluded with your ſelf according

Several Occaſions of Mens being irreligious.

ing

ing to the Proverb, *As good never a whit as never the better!*

Bioph. You are very ingenious in your gueſſes, *Sebaſtian*, but all in vain; for you can never find what was never loſt, nor can I have loſt what I never had. I tell you again, I neither have, nor ever had any Religion that I know of.

Phil. You might well have ſpared thoſe laſt Words, *Biophilus*; for I will undertake for you, you have no Religion indeed, if you do not know of it. Religion is not like a Diſeaſe, to be catch'd before we are aware, nor can it be impoſed upon us without our Conſent and Privity: Beſides it is ſo active and vigorous a Principle, that it will diſcover itſelf, and a Man may as well carry Fire in his Boſom and not be burnt, as carry Religion in his Heart and not be ſenſible of it.

Sebaſt. You mightily increaſe my Wonder; I am at a Loſs how this could come to paſs: Did you grow, like a Muſhroom out of the Earth? Or what was the manner of your Education?

Ill Education.

Bioph. My Birth, *Sebaſtian*, was, I ſuppoſe like other Men's, but perhaps my Breeding might have ſomething peculiar in it. For amongſt other things that happened to me, it fell out that one of thoſe Perſons who ſhould eſpecially have taken care of my Inſtitution, being a great Fanatick, was ſtrongly of the Opinion, that the Spirit of God (as his Phraſe was) muſt immediately and by himſelf effect all the Good that is in any Man; and therefore he concluded it would not only be loſt Labour, but a Derogation from the Grace of God, to make uſe of any means, or to be much concerned about my Education. And then, for the reſt of them to whom I was committed in my Minority, they were great Politicians, and pretended they ſhould conſult my Intereſt moſt by keeping

me

me diſengaged from any Party in Religion, that ſo I might be always at liberty to join my ſelf with that which ſhould prove moſt to my temporal Advantage.

Phil. Shrewdly projected on both Parts, inſomuch that it is hard to ſay whether the Divinity of the former, or the Politick of the latter be the more wonderful.

Sebaſt. Here was a Beginning bad enough, I confeſs; but when you grew a Man, and became at your own Diſpoſe, what kept you unreſolv'd in this great Affair?

Bioph. For that, I muſt tell you, that my ſetting out in the World fell about the late Times of publick Diſtraction, and then I obſerved there were ſo many Religions, that it was not eaſy to reſolve which to chuſe, and upon that Account I continued neuter ſtill.

Sebaſt. Nay, *Biophilus*, there you was wanting to your ſelf, as much as your Guardians had been wanting to you before; for the more Diſputes concerning Religion there are in the World, it is far the greater Probability that there is at leaſt ſome general Truths amongſt them, tho' many of the Particulars muſt needs be miſtaken: Beſides, if you had conſidered that Matter diligently, you would have found that few or none of thoſe Diſputes were about the Fundamentals of Religion, but only about certain Notions or Modes and and Forms; and you might have abſtracted from them, and been a good Chriſtian nevertheleſs.

Bioph. It may be ſo, and, I confeſs, I had ſometimes ſuch Thoughts; but then whenever I began to look that Way, there were thoſe briſk young Men about me, who, obſerving me to grow a little ſerious, would preach to me at this Rate; What, *Biophilus*, do you grow weary of

Ill Company betrays Men to Atheiſm.

your Liberty? Do you not know there are Bonds in Religion, as well as in Matrimony? Are you not aware how it reſtrains the Pleaſures of Life, and damps all Jollity? If once you let looſe that thing call'd Conſcience, it will coſt you a great deal of Art and Pains to hamper it again, and ſubdue it to your Intereſts. Do but obſerve (ſay they) that whenſoever any Man comes under the Power of Religion, it abates his Courage and Bravery, and renders him tame and ſheepiſh, liable to be affronted by every Body. In a Word, ſaid they, all that which they call the Fear of God, and Concern for another World, is nothing but either the Effect of Ignorance, Pedantry, or Hypocriſy; but to make our ſelves merry with both, is true Wit and Gallantry.

Phil. Lord! What Pity it is that ſuch Men as you ſpeak of were not condemned to wear Fools Coats, or that they have not ſome Mark ſet upon them, that Men might avoid them as Lepers, or Men infected with ſome ſuch loathſome and contagious Diſeaſe. I pray, Sir, what Opinion had you of that Sort of Men, and the Preachments they made?

The Rudeneſs and Barbarity of Atheiſts.

To tell you the Truth, I had not much better Conceit of them my ſelf, than you have; for though they pretend to Wit yet it is little more than Impudence and Scurrility; and beſides that, they are rude towards the moſt general Perſuaſion of Mankind. I obſerve withal, that the greateſt Talkers at that rate, are commonly Men that not only proſtitute their Reputation, but ſquander away their Eſtate, their Health and Lives alſo with ſuch Incogitancy and prodigious Folly, that I can by no means think their Judgment is to be relied upon in any ſerious matter; yet I muſt needs ſay, ſomething ſtuck

with

with me by the frequent Harangues and Converſation of ſuch Men.

Phil. I am in great hopes of you, *Biophilus*, that you will come over to us, now you betray the ſecrets of Atheiſm. You have revealed the very *Myſtery of Iniquity*; 'tis liberty to be lewd and wicked, and perfect Licentiouſneſs that is the ſecret root and cauſe of Atheiſm; and Men of a profligate Senſe and debauched Tempers, are the principal Advocates for it, and the ſworn Enemies to Religion, as indeed they are to every thing that is ſerious.

Sebaſt. *Biophilus* ſpeaks like a Man of Senſe and Ingenuity, and give me leave to ſay, Sir, I cannot tell whether I ought more to applaud the ſagacity of your Mind, or to deplore the unhappineſs of your Education and Acquaintance; it is a thouſand pities the former ſhould lie under the fatal prejudices of the latter: And I ſhould account nothing to have befallen me in my whole Life more lucky or deſirable, than an opportunity of reſcuing ſuch a temper from ſuch a calamity. But, I pray, with the ſame ingenuity you have hitherto expreſs'd, tell me, have you gone away currently with this incurioufneſs or unconcernedneſs for Religion? Have you not ſometimes had conflicts within your ſelf upon the point we are upon?

The irreligious Man's conflict with himſelf.

Bioph. I confeſs I have; for ſometimes, whereas I could not but obſerve this buſineſs of Religion to be the great Theme of the World, I mean to be that which the generality of Mankind are very buſie and ſolicitous about (for I can call to mind but very few who have not in ſome ſort or other pretended to it;) and I take notice alſo, that moſt of the ſharpeſt Diſputes and hotteſt Conteſts are raiſed about it; ſurely then (thought I) theſe Men are in earneſt, and believe

themſelves in this Affair, and then why ſhould I make the adventure alone? It may become me in prudence to have ſome concern about it too; eſpecially when I conſider'd and ſaw plainly that by the courſe of all the World I muſt ſhortly die; and foraſmuch as it was impoſſible for me to be certain what might or might not come afterwards, and what ſtrange Revolutions might ſucceed my going off the Stage of this World, within the compaſs of that vaſt tract of time which I was likely to leave behind me. Hereupon methought it became me in diſcretion to provide for the worſt. To all which I muſt add, That I have at ſeveral times had unaccountable qualms and miſ-givings of Heart (upon ſome of the foregoing Conſiderations, or ſomething of that nature) which not a little ſtartled me for the preſent; but then I endeavoured to check them as the effects of Melancholy and mere Panick Fears; notwithſtanding, in ſpight of my Heart, they would return upon me, and gave me ſuſpicion that they might have ſome other ground than I was aware of.

Sebaſt. Well, and would not theſe things prevail upon you to lay aſide your neutrality, and determine you to a ſerious Conſideration of Religion?

Bioph. No truly, they did not, for I had other thoughts came into my Mind, which ſeemed to counter-balance the former, and brought me to an *æquilibrium*, or to hang in ſuch a ſuſpence as you now find me in: For I ſuſpected my ſuſpicions, and fell in doubt whether thoſe odd kind of bodings and preſages of my own Mind, which I told you of, concerning God and a future State, might not proceed from the mere weakneſs and timidity of human Nature; or from Ignorance, Melancholy, or natural Superſtition, without any juſt and reaſonable Foundation. And then as for thoſe Apprehenſions of Religion, which I obſerved

ſerved to be generally in other Men, I therein ſuſpected the Arts of cunning Men and State-Politicians, who might poſſibly have deſigns to overreach others into thoſe Perſuaſions which they had no ſenſe of themſelves. Upon ſuch Conſiderations as theſe, I was inclined on the other ſide, not to give myſelf any trouble about that which ſeem'd ſo dark and uncertain.

Devotion towards God is neither the Effect of Ignorance, Cowardice, Superſtition, &c. but hath real and rational Grounds.

Sebaſt. I pity you with all my Heart, *Biophilus*, and yet my wonder is almoſt equal to my pity, that a Man of your ſagacity ſhould be ſtagger'd by ſuch groundleſs Fancies; and withal, I cannot but hope that your ſecond Thoughts will eaſily aſſoil you in this Caſe. For in the firſt place, you cannot but have obſerved that many of the ſhrewdeſt Men in the World, are as much under an awful ſenſe of Religion, as the moſt eaſie and injudicious. Nay, ordinarily, the more throughly learned and wiſe any Men are, the more hearty and earneſt they are in this Affair. From whence you cannot (without doing violence to your Diſcretion) but conclude, that Religion and Devotion are far from being the mere effects of ignorance and impoſture; whatever ſome ſhatter-brain'd and debauch'd Perſons would fain perſuade themſelves and others.

And then in the ſecond place, when you conſider that the moſt brave and couragious do as well take ſanctuary in Religion, and embrace it as ardently as the moſt timorous and cowardly; you will have no more reaſon to impute the riſe of Piety to Puſillanimity or ſuperſtitious Fears, than you had before to charge it upon Folly and Ignorance, or the Cheats of Politicians; but muſt be forced to conclude this great buſineſs to be more

deeply founded, and to depend upon higher Cauſes.

Bioph. You ſay well, Sir, and I ſhould be apt to think ſo too, if I could learn what thoſe higher Cauſes and deep Foundations are, which you ſpeak of; and herein I would gladly have your advice, who (as I am perſuaded) have too great a judgment to be led away with popular Errors, and (I am confident) whoſe Integrity is ſuch as will not ſuffer you to be acceſſory to the impoſing upon me. Tell me therefore, I beſeech you, into what real Cauſes I ought to reſolve, either thoſe private Impreſſions of Religion I have found in my ſelf, or thoſe more publick Effects of it, which I have obſerved in others.

Sebaſt. Play the Man, *Biophilus*, and judge with your ſelf, into what Cauſes ſhould you, or can you reſolve ſuch Effects, but thoſe that are as real and ſubſtantial as the Effects themſelves; namely, the plain reaſonableneſs of that thing (called Religion) approving it ſelf both to the inward ſenſe of your own Mind, and to human Nature in general; that is to ſay, there is firſt a natural impreſs of Religion, which God hath left upon the Conſciences of Men, which is, as it were, the internal ſenſe of the Soul: And then when the Reaſon reflects alſo upon this buſineſs, human judgment prudentially weighing and eſtimating the Reaſons for it, and the Objections againſt it, together with the moment and importance of the thing, pronounces it upon due Conſideration, to be the prime and moſt neceſſary concern of Mankind.

Bioph. But if you will make me your Diſciple, I muſt intreat you to deal more expreſſly, and particularly with me, and to open to the very bottom, the Foundations of the thing in queſtion. And let me beg your pardon, if I tell you that

you

you are obſerved to be a Man of ſuch Eloquence, that you are able to wheedle a Man into your Opinion, be it what it can. But I pray deal plainly and rationally with me, ſeeing that otherwiſe if I ſhould become your Convert, you will have but little Credit by me, ſince, in that caſe, my zeal would be without knowledge, and my heat without light; and, beſides (to wiſer Men) you will but ſeem to beg the Queſtion, and artificially to perſuade to that which you cannot prove. Therefore (as I intimated before) pray make me to underſtand, that Religion is as reaſonable in it ſelf, and in its Principles, as you have repreſented it to be important in the Conſequences of it.

Sebaſt. I underſtand you, but I have gone more than half way in that already; for having ſhewed you the conſequence of Religion to be ſuch, as that a Man can neither live nor die comfortably without it, there is therefore all the reaſon in the World for it. For he that proves a thing to be neceſſary, does more than prove it to be real.

Bioph. That was a ſide blow, which I did not expect, I confeſs.

Sebaſt. But it is an home thruſt to the buſineſs, it doth *jugulum petere* (as they ſay) for it obliges you as you are a Man, and pretend either to prudence or ſelf-love, to apply your ſelf ſeriouſly to this Affair; nay, if there ſhould be wanting ſuch other proofs as you require, you cannot reaſonably inſiſt upon that, for your will acknowledge that ſelf-preſervation is the firſt and ſureſt principle in Nature; and ſure that is good proof, which proves that Man to be worſe than a Fool who doth not follow it.

Prudence and ſelf-love oblige a Man to be religious.

Bioph. That is home indeed: But let me tell you, it is one of my greateſt Prejudices againſt Religion, that the moſt zealous Defenders of it

talk of probable Arguments, and prudential Conſiderations, *&c.* Now, for my part, I require natural and direct Proofs, and nothing leſs will ſatisfy me.

Sebaſt. And, good *Biophilus*, had you not ſuch given you in our laſt Conference, and that in the very point which you choſe to join iſſue upon?

Bioph. I muſt confeſs in that one Point, *Of a Judgment to come*, you argued ſo ſhrewdly, that ſomething of it ſticks by me ſtill, but it may be it was becauſe I granted ſome things then for Civility ſake, which I will not be held to now. Beſides, if you ſhould make out ſome ſingle Point, and not the reſt, I ſhall be never the nearer: For it will but make a Diſpute and Confuſion in my Mind, and will come to no Iſſue: Foraſmuch as if all thoſe things that are neceſſary to the Being, and to the Obligation of Religion, be not reſolv'd of, there can be no ſuch thing as it. I deſire therefore now to ſee your whole *Hypotheſis* laid together, and all the grounds of it ſubſtantially made out.

Sebaſt. Why, that is done to my hand, and yours too, *Biophilus*, and you may ſave me the labour, if you pleaſe, by conſulting the incomparable *Hugo Grotius*, Biſhop *Wilkins*, or ſeveral other excellent Perſons (whom I need not name) who have performed this with exquiſite Learning and Judgment. And if you have not the Books by you, I will furniſh you with any of them.

Bioph. I thank you for the kind offer; but with your leave, I will ſtick to my firſt Requeſt, that we may diſcuſs the matter between our ſelves; both becauſe in this way of Conference you can explain your ſelf to me more fully, if I ſhould not reach your meaning at firſt: And

The Advantage of Conference above reading of Books in this Debate of Religion.

And beſides, I do not love that other Men ſhould make my Anſwers or Objections for me, but had rather make them my ſelf, (as beſt knowing where the Shoe pinches.)

Sebaſt. If you will have it ſo, I am content to be at your ſervice to the uttermoſt of my power; but let me tell you by the way, that tho' I take offence at nothing, yet I a little wonder'd at the Caution you put in (even now) againſt Eloquence. What did you mean, *Biophilus?* What was you afraid of? For my part, I can pretend to no other Skill, than to render thoſe things plain and eaſie, that was before true and reaſonable, or at moſt to be able to deliver hard Arguments in ſoft Words. Now, is an Argument ever the ſtronger for being crabbed and rough? Or the weaker, or leſs effectual, for being ſmooth and oily? Is it ſuch a pleaſure to be non-pluſs'd in Mood and Figure, that you had rather be ſnap'd in the Mouſe-trap of a Syllogiſm, than treated ſocratically and genteely? I promiſe you, I will uſe no Legerdemain, no ſlight of Hand with you; or if I ſhould go about it, you are too ſagacious to be impoſed upon by me. If you have a fancy for ſcholaſtic Gibberiſh, and love to be cramp'd with an *Ergo*, I am not altogether to ſeek in that way neither: But if you give me leave, I would rather chuſe that way of diſcourſing which we have held hitherto, as that which is leaſt apt to raiſe any heat or paſſion, and which will the moſt plainly and naturally repreſent the truth of things to you.

Bioph. Nay, marry, in ſuch a caſe as this, I have as littly fancy for chopping of Logick, as for the long wheedles of Rhetorick; I require only (as I ſaid) ſubſtantial Proofs; and ſo your Arguments be ſtrong, I care not how ſoft and ſilken the Lines be. Go on therefore in your own way, in *God's Name.*

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. Ay, that was well thought of indeed; for without *God's Bleſſing* we ſhall loſe all our labour; which that we may not do, let us both beg of him to guide our Minds in this affair; and let me alſo requeſt of you, *Biophilus*, that you will grant me theſe two or three reaſonable things, which are ſo very neceſſary to the ſucceſs of our Debate, that I ſhall be able to calculate the iſſue of it, from your ingenuity in the conceſſion of them.

Bioph. Without more Words, what are your demands?

Preliminaries to the Diſpute about Religion.

Sebaſt. In the firſt place, I deſire that you will wholly lay aſide all Drollery, in the management of this Cauſe, not only becauſe the buſineſs we are upon (as I hope you ſhall acknowledge by and by) is too weighty and ſolemn to be lightly and triflingly dealt withal; but eſpecially, becauſe this wanton trick of Drollery, is the only Engine in the World that can do miſchief to Religion. Reaſon, with all its Batteries, can never ſhake it; Experience can never confute it; the greateſt Shrewdneſs and Sagacity can never diſcover any flaws in it: But there is no fence againſt this flail of profane and ſcurrilous Drollery, that, with its apiſh Tricks and Buffoonry is able to render not only the wiſeſt Man in the World, but the moſt ſolid and ſubſtantial Truth, ridiculous. And therefore I have obſerved that ſpeculative Atheiſts are commonly well gifted this way; and the beſt of their Game is to put off that with a Jeſt, which they can never anſwer with all the Wit they have.

Againſt wanton Wit and Drollery in religious Matters.

Bioph. 'Tis granted; I will be very ſerious: What would you more?

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. My next demand is, That you will not doubt without cauſe, or ſome reaſon aſſignable of your doubting or denying any thing in Religion: For beſides that otherwiſe the humour of doubting is endleſs and infinite, and a Man may at this rate doubt and deny the things that are moſt evident in nature, and even the Principles of Diſcourſe it ſelf as well as of Religion; beſides this, I ſay, to doubt and deny thus groundleſſly and licentiouſly or peeviſhly, is not ſo much properly to doubt, as plainly to ſhew an unwillingneſs we have that the thing we diſpute about ſhould be true, which is cowardly and diſingenuous.

Doubting without end, and denying without ground are the uſual methods of Atheiſts.

There is, certainly, a modeſty, or a kind of genteel carriage due to all diſputes, eſpecially of this nature as we are upon; and it is not allowable to be carping and captious, or to make uſe of little tricks and ſhifts to evade and put off an Argument inſtead of anſwering it: And let me tell you, this I have obſerved to be the uſual method of the Adverſaries of Religion. They will put a Man to prove every thing, even the moſt ſelf-evident Propoſition: And one queſtion ſhall beget another, and that another, only to perplex the Cauſe, and to ſtave off the concluſion: Or when a Man hath given very reaſonable evidence of the point, they will yet put it off with, it may be otherwiſe; as if nothing could be true but what is impoſſible to be otherwiſe: Which is as abſurd, as if when a Man hath with the greateſt care and choice of his Materials, and according to the beſt Rules of Architecture built an Houſe, he ſhould yet be afraid to dwell in it when all is done; merely becauſe you cannot prove it to be impoſſible but that ſuch

ſuch an Houſe may preſently fall and oppreſs him in its Ruin.

Bioph. Be ſecure of me in that point alſo, I will diſcourſe fairly and ingenuouſly, and weigh the force of your Arguments with the beſt judgment I have: Is that all you would have?

Sebaſt. There is but one thing more I would ask, and indeed that is implied in what you have yielded already; but that we may not miſtake one another, I will mention it, *viz.* That you will be willing to believe Religion, if you ſee reaſon for it.

Bioph. That is not an ingenuous demand, *Sebaſtian*, if I underſtand you: For whilſt you ſeem to ask my conſent, you plainly beg your Cauſe; whereas you are to prove it with that evidence, as to make me believe it whether I will or no.

Nothing can make a Man believe againſt his will.

Sebaſt. There it is now, that makes the neceſſity of my demand apparent: For it is a mighty miſtake, *Biophilus*, to think that any Arguments whatſoever can be ſufficient to make a Man believe whether he will or no. It is a great queſtion whether God Almighty can make any Man believe againſt his will; indeed it ſeems a Contradiction to ſuppoſe it. He hath given Men freedom of Will, and *put them in the hand of their own counſel*, bid them make their Election, chuſe Life or Death: By which means as wiſe and good Men have the Glory and Comfort to co-operate towards their own Happineſs; ſo perverſe and obſtinate Men have the Shame and Remorſe of being guilty of their own Deſtruction. For when both Parties have Light to guide them, and Motives and Arguments to perſuade them, the one ingenuouſly complies, but the other wilfully refuſes, and employs the Prerogative

of

of his Nature, both againſt God, and his own Soul.

But in an human way it is plainly impoſſible: For if a Man have taken up his Poſt, which he reſolves to maintain, it is not in the power of Reaſon to remove him from it; the Will is immovable by any thing but it ſelf, and Reaſon is no equal Match for it. Now this is the Caſe of a great Part of the Adverſaries to Religion, and this is the main Diſadvantage of its Cauſe that ſuch Men have no Mind it ſhould be true; and then, *non perſuadebis etiamſi perſuaſeris*, they will hold the Concluſion in Spight of the Premiſſes: And this is the Reaſon why I require of you to be willing to believe, before I begin my Argument; not that I require you ſhould believe without Proof, but that you ſhould not oppoſe Prejudice to my Argument, but be true to your Reaſon, and to the Evidence that ſhall be given.

Bioph. If that be all you mean, 'tis granted alſo; and now that you have done with your Cautions, before you enter upon the Buſineſs, I muſt ask one thing of you, namely, that in this ſocratical Way of diſcourſing (as you call it) you will not be too prolix in your Arguments, heaping one Conſequence upon the Neck of another, till they make ſo long a Train, that a Man cannot ſee from End to End; but deal conciſely and decretorily, that I may be brought as compendiouſly as may be to the Point you drive at.

Shortneſs of Reaſon and Impatience of the whole Proceſs of an Argument is the fatal Miſcarriage of Atheiſts.

Sebaſt. Indeed, *Biophilus*, if I had thought of it, I ought to have caution'd againſt that very thing which you now demand; for this is another capital Miſtake in thoſe Men that are Strangers to theſe Matters, and which hath the fatal

fatal Miſchief to confirm a great many in Atheiſm. They expect to jump into the full Underſtanding of Religion preſently, whenſoever they make it the Subject of their Diſcourſe; and if it be not decided in one Syllogiſm or two, they immediately begin a Triumph, and conclude it a thing cannot be proved at all by Reaſon. I confeſs to you that God, in Compaſſion to Mankind, hath diſcovered a ſhort cut over to the other World; I mean a very compendious Way to a full Knowledge of, and Satisfaction in all the Myſteries of Religion, and that is by the Holy Scripture, which he deviſed on purpoſe, becauſe ſome Mens Capacities will not reach to a long Argument, and the Occaſions and buſy Life of others will not give them leiſure to attend the difficult and laborious Proceſs of Reaſon. And becauſe you reject that, and will not permit God almighty to judge for you, but will be your own Judge in the Caſe; therefore you muſt have Patience in this Way of Probation you put me upon. For if a Man will take nothing for current Coin, but what he hath wrought out of the Ore himſelf, nor believe any thing to be Truth but what he hath drawn out of the Depth by his own Skill and Strength, he muſt be content to take a great deal of Pains, and be at the Expence of a great deal of time, before he can arrive at Satisfaction; however, I hope, you ſhall have no Occaſion to accuſe me of tediouſneſs in this Argument.

Bioph. You ſpeak Reaſon, I confeſs; and I yield you this together with all your other Preliminaries: Now therefore to the Buſineſs.

Sebaſt. Know then, *Biophilus*, (without any farther Preface) that all this great Fabrick of Religion ſtands upon theſe three Pillars, *viz.*

First,

The three Pillars of Religion, and the Stress that lies on each of them.

First, that there is a God, as the Object of Devotion and religious Observance.

Secondly, That this God exercises a Providence over his Creatures, and Mankind especially; and so by observing how they carry themselves towards him, and consequently being able to reward or punish them accordingly, lays an Obligation upon them to observe and worship him.

Thirdly, That Mankind is a Subject capable of such an Obligation, and of paying such Devotion and Observance to the Deity.

Mistake me not, I say, upon all these three together in Conjunction doth the Truth and Reality of Religion depend, but if any one of them was wanting, it will be manifest that Religion would vanish into a Romance, and come to nothing.

For in the first Place, if there was no God, it would not only be certain that there is nothing to whom Religion could be due, but it would be as certain that there could be no Providence nor other Consideration to enforce the Care of it; and then consequently let the Constitution of Mankind be as capable of noble Performances as can be imagined, yet there could be no Ground nor Foundation of Religion.

Again, if we should acknowledge the Being of a God, and him also fit to be worshipped; yet if there be no Providence, so that this God doth not mind whether Men serve or disserve him, and consequently could not reward or punish accordingly, though it might in this Case be fansy'd to be a decent thing for all Creatures to pay some kind of Homage to so excellent a Being; yet there can be no Danger to them if they do not so,

ſo, conſequently no ſufficient Obligation upon them to perform it.

And laſtly, If there be both a God and a Providence acknowledged, and conſequently an Obligation to Religion; yet if Mankind be not a Subject capable of it; that is, if either he hath it not in his Power to know God's Will, or it is not in his Choice to ſerve or diſſerve him; the Buſineſs of Religion cannot concern him, nor can it be expected from him.

But if all theſe three things meet, and prove certainly true, then is this Buſineſs of Religion fully founded, and as immovable as the Foundations of Heaven and Earth. For, as I ſaid, the firſt Propoſition deſcribes the Object, the third qualifies the Subject, and the ſecond lays the Obligation of Religion which is all that can be required in the Caſe.

Bioph. You begin very ſhrewdly, I proteſt, and like a Man that would do the Buſineſs at laſt. Your Argument is cloſe and ſubſtantial, your Enumeration of Particulars exact, and your Conſequence undeniable: I ſay, if thoſe three things be proved, which yet you only ſuppoſe; the Pinch of the Buſineſs therefore lies in the Proof of thoſe three Aſſertions; and if you are able to make out the Truth of them ſeverally, as you have done the Conſequence of Religion from the Acknowledgment of them jointly, I muſt turn over a new Leaf, and be a Proſelyte, there is no Help for it. Firſt therefore, how do you prove there is a God?

Sebaſt. Ah, *Biophilus*, hath not God given ſufficient Proof of himſelf to your own Heart and Conſcience, by the lively Impreſſes he hath made of himſelf there? And hath he not made Demonſtration of his Divinity to all the World by all his Ope-

Operations, especially by the Creation of this mighty Fabrick of Heaven and Earth, and all that admirable Power, Wisdom and Goodness, which shines through the whole Frame of Nature? This (let me tell you) is the Proof of himself, which he himself appeals to, *Psal.* 19. 1. *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament setteth forth his handy-work.* And again, *Rom.* 1. 22. *The invisible things of him are seen by the Creation of the World,* &c.

Bioph. What Pity is it that so brave a Beginning should come off thus poorly! I did suspect it would come to this; but could you think, *Sebastian,* that I would be born down with the Authority of an old Book in such a Case as this is? No, no, I must have my Reason satisfied: I say again therefore, how do you prove there is a God? *The Proof of the Being of a God.*

Sebast. You are, I perceive as quick in replying as you are slow in believing: However I am glad, that though you are incredulous, you are not humoursome too. Some Men perhaps in your Place would have said, let me see a God; but it seems you are content to have your Reason satisfied. Now do not mistake me, *Biophilus,* I did not intend to urge you with the Authority of these sacred Writers, but with the Force of the Argument they made use of. Tell me then in earnest, how do you satisfy your Reason concerning the Existence of any thing which you do not see? Or, in brief, do you not think that to be sufficient Proof of the Being of a Cause, when it is made out by its Effects?

Bioph. Yes, I do; for if I see (*Phænomena,* or) Appearances of things, which I can give no Account of without resolving them into such a Cause,

then I conclude such a Cause must be as real as those Appearances or Effects are.

Sebast. Very good, then I tell you, after the same manner I prove there is a God, namely, because there are such Effects as speak and necessarily require such a Cause.

Bioph. Now you are right again, make that out and you do your Work.

Sebast. That there is such a thing as that which we call the World, or this great Building of Heaven and Earth, with all the Furniture and Inhabitants of it, this I am sure you will grant; but how this World came to be what it is, is to be considered of. Now, say I, as Art betrays an Artist, and the Effect the Cause; so doth the Being of a World speak a God that made it. The mere Existence of such a thing as a World, requires that there be a Cause of that Existence, and that is it which we mean by a first Cause; and then the admirable Art and plain Footsteps of Skill and Contrivance, which are visible in the Frame of this World, require that this first Cause be wise and powerful, which is the more complete Notion of a God. So that (as I said) so surely as there is a World, so surely there must be a God; forasmuch as if there had not been a God to make it, there could have been nothing at all: Is not this plain Proof, *Biophilus*, and such as you required?

Bioph. Very far from it, I assure you (if my Understanding fail me not;) for, in the first Place, why might not the World make it self? Or secondly, why might it not be from Eternity, without Beginning? Or lastly, why might it not be made by Chance? All which Opinions, you know, have had their respective Patrons. Now any of these Ways (it is evident that) your Argument for a God comes to nothing.

Sebaſt. God help you, *Biophilus*; did you not promiſe that you would not ſeek to ſhift off the Arguments I ſhould bring for this Cauſe, by little Querks and Evaſions? And can you ſo ſoon find in your Heart to give Countenance to the moſt exploded Abſurdities; nay, to ſwallow the moſt palpable Contradictions, rather than yield to Reaſon for the Belief of a God? And that this is your Caſe, is evident enough, by the Multitude of Shifts you muſter together at this preſent: For I aſſure my ſelf, if you durſt have truſted to any one of theſe ſingly, you would have inſiſted on that, and not mentioned the other; and you know, if each of them ſingle are abſurd, the Combination of them altogether cannot mend the Matter, nor make a reaſonable Objection againſt the Argument I have brought. *That the World could not make it ſelf.*

Bioph. You ſay well, but then you muſt make it appear that all theſe are mere Subterfuges, otherwiſe they muſt ſtand for a ſufficient Anſwer; and, I pray you, in the firſt Place, why might not the World make it ſelf? And then there is no need of a God.

Sebaſt. Even for this ſmall Reaſon this World could not make it ſelf, becauſe it implies a flat Contradiction: For then it muſt be Cauſe and Effect, in the ſame Reſpect, and at the ſame time; *i. e.* it muſt act before it was, and be before it ſelf: In a Word, it muſt be and not be together, and if that be not abſurd enough, I know not what is ſo.

Bioph. I confeſs, you ſeem to have loaded that Conceit with *Odium* enough; but then, how comes it to paſs that the Men of your Perſuaſion digeſt all this Impoſſibility well enough in another Way, when they ſay, God had his Being from himſelf,

or gave Being to himſelf? If this can be true, I ſee not but the other may.

Sebaſt. Very right, Sir, for either of them is impoſſible: But you miſtake, (the Men of my Perſuaſion, as you call them) for there is no Man of Senſe will ſay or mean, that poſitively God gave Beginning or Being to himſelf: But only negatively, that he had not his Being from any other Cauſe; that is, he is properly an eternal, neceſſary Being, without any Cauſe, or Beginning at all: And if you go about to apply this to the World, you forſake your firſt Hold, and fly to your ſecond Refuge.

Bioph. I am ſenſible of what you ſay. I confeſs my firſt Objection is not tenable; but what ſay you then to the ſecond? Why may not the World be eternal? And then you ſeem to grant there can be no Neceſſity of a God.

Sebaſt. To your ſecond Evaſion I oppoſe theſe three things, which when you have conſidered of, I doubt not but you will ſee it to be no better than the former. Namely, Firſt, I will ſhew you that you can gain nothing by it, if it ſhould be true. Secondly, that the Suppoſition of it is more difficult and incredible, than that which you ſeek to avoid by it: And, Thirdly, That it is impoſſible it ſhould be true.

That the World could not be from Eternity.

Firſt, You can gain nothing towards the ſatisfaction of your Mind, or for the eaſing you of any Difficulty, by aſſerting the Eternity of the World. For the greateſt Difficulty in the whole buſineſs of Religion, and indeed in all Philoſophy too, is, to acknowledge ſuch a thing as an eternal Being, or any thing that hath neither Cauſe nor Beginning, which here you ſwallow without chewing, in ſuppoſing the World to be eternal.

It is true indeed, if a Man look to the very bottom of things, it is not to be avoided, but that ſome Eternal and Self-exiſtent Being muſt be granted. For ſeeing nothing can give Being to itſelf, (as I ſhewed you but now) it is plain that either Something muſt have been without beginning, or Nothing could have been at all; *i. e.* there muſt be either an eternal God, or ſome eternal Cauſe or other, or nothing could ever have been in time. For whatever firſt begins to be, muſt take its riſe from ſomething that had no beginning.

This, I ſay, muſt neceſſarily be yielded by every conſidering Man, and you confeſs as much, when, to avoid the acknowledgment of a God, you ſuppoſe the World to be Eternal. Now in ſo doing you bring in as great a Difficulty (at leaſt) as that which you would ſeem to avoid; for the belief of an eternal Being is manifeſtly the hardeſt thing to conceive in the whole Notion of a God; ſo that (as I ſaid) you expedite no Difficulty thereby, but only plainly betray an unwillingneſs to believe there is a God, and that is all that comes of it.

Nay, Secondly, This Suppoſition of yours, is far more difficult than that which it is deſigned to avoid. For it is apparently more unreaſonable to allow Eternity to the World than to God; becauſe to be Eternal, or to be without Cauſe and Beginning, implies a neceſſity of Exiſtence, or that ſuch a thing could not but be; for nothing can be conceived to be without Efficient or Cauſe of its Being, but that which could not but be, or which was impoſſible not to be. Now I dare appeal to you whether it be not more reaſonable to ſuppoſe ſuch a ſuperlatively excellent kind of Being, to be the privilege of a wiſe, powerful and

free Agent (by which we mean a God) than to apply it to that lump of Matter, (which we call the World) or (which amounts to the same thing) whether it be not more likely that this wonderful Prerogative of first Being, or necessity of Existence (which you acknowledge must be seated somewhere) shall be accompanied with Life, Understanding, Freedom of Will, *&c.* all which are in the notion of a God, than that such a Prerogative should go alone, and so the first and principal Being, be in effect one of the meanest, as being destitute of all those other Perfections, as must needs be, if the World be that first and eternal Being.

Especially if you cast in this also, that neither you nor any rational Man would ever have gone about to fansy the World's being necessarily Existent or without Beginning, but only for want of a God to make it; (I mean upon account of the difficulty of understanding such a Being as is required in the case) now forasmuch as that includes no greater difficulty, than what you are constrained to acknowledge without a God, it is extreamly unjust to rely upon it as a sufficient Objection against him.

But, Thirdly and Lastly, This Suggestion of yours concerning the Eternity of the World is plainly impossible to be true; as it were easy to make out in any of the several parts or parcels of which it consists. But I will content my self to shew it you in the instance of Mankind only, and that after this manner.

If Mankind was from Eternity, or without Beginning, then it must consequently be acknowledged that there have been infinite Successions of Men, one after another, and that some of those Generations have been infinitely distant from others.

thers: For all this is implied in infinite Succeſſion, or the Eternity of ſucceſſive Beings. But now let us take what Link we will of this Chain; I mean, let us take what Man ſoever in this infinite Line, it is certain he muſt be but Thirty, or Forty, or a Hundred Years (more or leſs) elder than ſome Son of his, which proceeded from him by lineal Deſcent. And then it is as plain that in this caſe, that Son of his (whoever he was) is not eternal or of infinite duration, becauſe he is of leſs duration than his Father, by the ſaid Thirty or Forty Years, (or more or leſs:) And on the other ſide, it is plain alſo, that the Father cannot be eternal, or of infinite duration neither, becauſe he is but Thirty or Forty Years, (as aforeſaid) elder than the ſaid Son who was finite. For a finite number added to a finite can never make an infinite. Therefore (upon the whole) this Race of Mankind cannot be infinite, but muſt have had a beginning, and conſequently there muſt be a God who gave beginning to him, and to all things elſe. What think you now, *Biophilus*? What is become of your ſecond Evaſion of a God, by ſuppoſing the World to be Eternal?

Bioph. Truly I cannot tell well what to ſay, but that I am deceived in you; I ſuſpected you would have entertained me with long harangues, and have wheedled me with Oratory; but I fear now you will run me down by main force, unleſs there be ſome trick of Sophiſtry in it.

Sebaſt. God forbid that I ſhould *tell a lye for him*, whoſe Cauſe needs not to be defended by a Cheat; no, aſſure your ſelf the Argument is ſound and ſubſtantial; If I had known the leaſt flaw in it, I would never have made uſe of it; and I am confident the more you conſider it, the more ſolid and unanſwerable you will find it.

That the World was not made by Chance.

Bioph. Then I perceive I am reduced to my laſt refuge, That the World was made by Chance, or elſe I muſt yield you there is a God; and why may not that be true, which a great Sect of Philoſophers, I mean the *Epicureans*, held? *viz.* That ſome lucky hit of Matter at laſt produced the World without a God. And if once things were gotten into Being without him, there could be no neceſſity afterwards to introduce him, and conſequently no Obligation of religious Obſervance towards him.

Sebaſt. In thoſe laſt Words you reaſon very well, *Biophilus*, and its pity you had not a better Hypotheſis to exerciſe it upon. For it is very true, that if it was poſſible to imagine a World to be made any other way, or without a God, there could be no ſufficient reaſon to bring him upon the Stage, or much leſs any religious Obligation towards him; and therefore doubtleſs it was only Hypocriſy and a piece of Cunning in your *Epicurean* Friends, to bring in a God when they had fanſied the making of the World without him: The former they did to decline the *odium* of flat Atheiſm, and to ſecure themſelves from the danger of human Laws; but by the latter they undermined the Reaſons of Religion, which was the thing they aimed at. But as to that Hypotheſis of theirs, which you now eſpouſe, it is the moſt miſerable ſhift of all you have made. For,

1. This takes for granted, That the Matter of the World exiſted of it ſelf and was Eternal, which I doubt not but hath appeared abſurd enough, by what hath been ſaid already upon the former Head.

2. It ſuppoſes alſo Matter to be in Motion, without any Cauſe of that Motion; which is

worſe

worſe than the former, ſince we can never ſatisfy our ſelves that Motion naturally belongs to Matter; but contrariwiſe, that it is only paſſive, and capable of receiving it from ſomething elſe. Now till theſe two things be proved, it is in vain to dream what lucky hits might happen in order to the production of a World.

3. It ſuppoſes mere chance and blind Contingency to be the ſole Cauſe of the moſt wiſe, regular and artificial Effects that can be imagined. Now it ſeems beyond meaſure ridiculous to think that ſuch a World as this plainly is, wherein there are undeniably all the Footſteps of the moſt exquiſite Skill and Contrivance; wherein (I ſay) there is both ſuch admirable variety of things, and yet ſuch exact order and correſpondence of one thing with another, and withal ſuch conſtancy in the Laws of the whole, that this ſhould be effected notwithſtanding, without any Reaſon or Wiſdom, and be the product of blind Chance. It were certainly a thouſand times more manly to imagine that Books were written by the caſual co-incidence of Letters, or Houſes and Ships were built by a fortuitous jumble of Stones, Iron and Timber, than that Chance ſhould make ſuch a World as this, which for Greatneſs, Order, Symmetry, and Beauty, and all other Inſtances of Art and Wiſdom, infinitely ſurpaſſes all human performances whatſoever: And now, what is become of your three formidable Objections?

Bioph. Nay, do not triumph too ſoon, *Sebaſtian*, the Field is not yet won; for I have a reſerve that may chance put you to it ſtill, and it is this: You have, I confeſs, argued ſmartly to prove the World could not be made without an Efficient, but you forget that this will recoil upon your ſelf, who have taken no care for Matter out of which God

God ſhould make a World; and ſure it is as difficult to want Matter as to want an Architect.

God needed not Matter out of which to make a World.

Sebaſt. It is very true, I have not in my Hypotheſis, provided Matter for the making of the World, but yet I have proved an eternal, perfect and unlimited Being for the Efficient, who may very well be ſuppoſed to be able to ſupply the want of that out of his own eminent Perfection: For it is certain that the firſt and ſupreme Cauſe muſt needs have the Root and Seeds of all things in himſelf, and eminently contain all the powers of inferior Cauſes, and conſequently may well be ſuppoſed able to ſupply a material Cauſe; at leaſt here is no contradiction in all this, and therefore it cannot be ſaid to be impoſſible, (for nothing can be juſtly pronounced to be the latter, but what falls under the former:) and now for Motion to begin without a Mover, and any thing to be effected without an active Cauſe, is plainly contradictious to our Reaſon, and therefore to be pronounced impoſſible.

You ſee an inſtance, or at leaſt ſome kind of reſemblance of the former in our ſelves: We frame thoughts out of the pregnancy of our own Minds, without any Matter to make them of, and therefore we may much rather allow God to be able to do ſo.

Beſides, if I ſhould grant you that God had Matter at hand out of which to make a World, you would be at the ſame loſs ſtill to know how he was able to make Souls out of it; and ſuch things there are in the World, which it is every whit as difficult to ſhew how they can be extracted out of Matter, as to ſuppoſe Matter it ſelf to be ſupplied by the unconfined power of the Supreme Agent; and therefore you had as good reſt ſatisfied in the Anſwer above, *viz.* That for

any

any thing to begin to be without an Efficient is contradictious, but to begin to be without a material Cauſe can never be proved to be ſo. And now, I hope, your Reſerve is vanquiſhed as well as your main Body, and you will now acknowledge that notwithſtanding all your Objections to the contrary, the mere Fabrick of the World is a ſufficient evidence of a God.

Phil. I have with great ſatisfaction heard all this long Diſpute between you, my two Friends; I could not in Conſcience take your part, *Biophilus*, and I know, *Sebaſtian*, you need not my aſſiſtance, and I am glad to ſee Victory begin to incline to the right ſide; but all this while I could not chuſe but ſtand and admire the Divine Patience, who ſuffers the curious and ingrateful Wit of Man to impeach his very Being. Lord! That thoſe who were brought into the World by him, ſhould ſo ſtrenuouſly endeavour to exclude him out of it; and that thoſe ſhould muſter up all their Wits againſt him, that made them to differ from the Beaſts!

It is matter of juſt wonder that Men ſhould be ſo unwilling to believe a God, and take ſo much pains to diſpute him out of Being.

But what ſhould be the occaſion of this I cannot imagine, nor what ſhould tempt Men to be ſo unwilling to believe a God. If like (what the Poets ſay of) *Saturn*, he eat up his own Children; or like *Moloch*, the Idol of the *Ammonites*, he could be pretended to take delight in the ſad Cries and dying Groans of his Worſhippers, they could not well do more againſt him than they do.

Or if he was a ſevere Tyrant, that lay at catch for his Subjects, and like *Buſiris* or *Phalaris*, employed himſelf wholly in deviſing Tortures for them; or if he was a God of mere Power and Will, and ſo always to be horribly dreaded, becauſe

cauſe Men knew not what uſe he would make of his unlimited Power, no wonder then if they were willing to be rid of him.

Or if he was only (Θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς) a mere neceſſary Agent that only ſerved a certain turn in the World, namely, to give Beginning to Motion, then when that Work was done, Men might perhaps be content to ſpare him.

But ſince he is perfect Wiſdom, and perfect Goodneſs, and, in one word, Perfection it ſelf, containing in his own Nature all that is deſirable, the firſt of Beings, and therefore can want nothing, becauſe there was nothing before him to reſtrain or limit him; and becauſe all things were in him as in their Fountain, infinitely full and ſelf-ſufficient, that he can need nothing from his Creatures, nor can grudge them any thing that is fit for them.

A God that made us merely out of the overflowings of his own Goodneſs, and that he might have thoſe whom he might delight and make happy in the Communications of himſelf to them.

That God is a deſirable Being, &c.

A God that is always preſent to us, tender of us, and daily doth us good in this World, and hath provided an Heaven of unſpeakable Felicity to receive us into, and treat us in, when he takes us hence.

What can tempt us, I ſay, to wiſh he were not, to diſpute his Being, or ſo much as to entertain a doubt concerning him, who is the moſt deſirable thing in the whole World?

Come, *Biophilus*, lay down your Arms and ſubmit to this great and good God, and he will pardon you. You diſpute all this while againſt your ſelf and your own Comfort more than againſt him: There is no contending with the Almighty, he can confute you with Thunder, and Fire, and Brimſtone,

Brimſtone, and ſo he might right himſelf, but then you will periſh; yet he is pitiful and gracious, and had rather you ſhould be ſenſible of his Goodneſs, than feel the effects of his Power. You ſaid, Reaſon would ſatisfie you, and I think you have had it from *Sebaſtian*. Deal ingenuouſly therefore; Do you not ſee ſufficient ground to believe there is a God? It is no diſhonour to yield to truth.

Bioph. I perceive I am aſſaulted on both ſides, like the Traveller in the Fable, by the Sun and the Wind; *Sebaſtian* hath preſs'd hard upon me by Arguments, and you, *Philander*, have charmed me with your Eloquence, and the lovely Picture you have drawn of God. I can no longer withſtand you, I yield, I yield there is a God.

Sebaſt. God be thanked we are gotten one Step onwards of your Way towards Religion, we have a God to Worſhip; but I muſt ingenuouſly confeſs to you (as I have intimated already) that this will not do the Buſineſs if we go no farther. For though in Conſideration that there is a God, and he a great and excellent Being, it may be fit and decent to worſhip him, yet this hath not the Effect of a Law, nor ſufficiently obliges any Creature to the doing of it, unleſs it appear alſo that this God exerciſe a Providence over the World, that is, unleſs he obſerve the Carriage, remark the Actions whether good or evil, of thoſe he expects religious Obſervance from, and will ſome Way or other call them to Account, and reward or puniſh them reſpectively. But if this ſecond Point be made out too, this will bring the Buſineſs home; and make it the great Concern of all thoſe that love themſelves, to be devout and religious.

That there is a Providence in and over the World, is the ſecond Principle of Religion.

Bioph.

Biophil. I am very ſenſible of it, *Sebaſtian*, and that not only becauſe my old Maſter *Epicurus* granted a God, but denying a Providence thought himſelf ſecure enough from that God, and under no Obligations to Religion; but alſo becauſe your own Method which you have laid down, requires it: Let that therefore be your next Undertaking.

Sebaſt. It ſhall be ſo, *Biophilus*, and that not only for the Reaſons you give me for ſo doing, but alſo becauſe I am aware, that although the Argument I made uſe of for the Proof of the Being of God, be ſtrong and unanſwerable; yet I confeſs it was ſomething obſcure and metaphyſical (which there was no Help for;) but now if I make out that there is a Providence, this will add both Light and Strength to what I have hitherto diſcourſed: For though it may be imagined, that there is a God, and yet no Providence, yet it is indubitable, that if there be a Providence, there muſt be a God.

Now that there is ſuch a Providence as we ſpeak of, I doubt not to convince any conſiderate Man of, theſe two Ways, *viz.*

1. From the Cauſes and Reaſons of it.
2. From the viſible Inſtances and Effects of it.

Proof of a Providence.

In the firſt Place, there is very great Reaſon to aſſure one ſelf that God exerciſes a Providence over the World, from the Conſideration of thoſe Perfections, which (by what hath been ſaid already) appear to be in the divine Nature, namely, infinite Wiſdom and Power, both which we muſt neceſſarily aſcribe to him, whom we allow to be Creator of the World. Now there can be no Reaſon to doubt whether it be in his Power to look over and mind all the Paſſages of the World, when we have acknowledged his Power

Power to have been ſufficient to give Beginning to that which was not, and to make a World out of nothing, which is incomparably the more difficult Province.

And then if we are ſatisfied that ſuch a Providence is not impoſſible, the ſame Wiſdom which joined with his Power in making the World, will oblige him to exert and put forth himſelf in the Management of it when he hath made it. For it is not conceivable that a wiſe Being ſhould wholly abandon and be unconcerned for that piece of Workmanſhip of his, wherein he hath made the greateſt Demonſtration of Art and Skill in the Contrivance of. Such a ſupine Negligence as this is not eaſily to be ſuſpected in the meaneſt of intelligent Beings; and therefore there can be no Colour of Reaſon that the firſt and moſt perfect of Beings ſhould be thought guilty of it.

This I take to be a ſufficient Argument of a Providence between you and me, now that you are come to the Acknowledgment of a God and Creator of the World; but I will not inſiſt upon it, becauſe I promiſed to give ſuch Evidence of this Point, as ſhould at the ſame time (and *à majori*, as they ſay) conclude the former Principle alſo; I mean, that there is a God.

And therefore I ſhall now come to the ſecond Way of Probation, *viz.* from the viſible Inſtances and Effects of a Providence, but (you remember) I have already prevented my ſelf herein, by what paſſed between us in a former Conference, where I ſhew'd, at large, the evident Footſteps of Providence in his managing or overruling the ordinary Courſe of Nature in two remarkable Inſtances, *viz.* 1. In the Propheſies and Predictions of things to come, which have been ſo admirably verified in the Event, as muſt argue

V. Conf. 2. *pag.* 167. *to p.* 183.

gue an all-seeing Eye over all the Motions of second Causes. And, 2. In the Miracles that have been wrought in the several Ages of the World, wherein the divine Majesty hath apparently interposed, and either suspended or over-ruled, heighten'd or accelerated the Motion and Force of natural Causes, and by both together, given Proof of his Being, and of his minding the Affairs of the World.

I assure my self I shall not need to repeat that Argument at large, but may trust your Memory for it; only if now upon so long time of Consideration, you have any thing material to object on that Account, I am ready to make good what I have asserted.

Bioph. I must needs say you deal fairly and ingenuously thus far; and now that I recollect the Sum and Drift of that Discourse of yours, I have, as I think, this very material thing to say against it, namely, that we cannot observe any such Interpositions of divine Providence as you speak of now-a-days, but the World is left wholly to the Course of natural Causes. If you would have appealed either to Miracles or Prophecy in the present Age, so that a Man might have made his own Eyes Witnesses of Matter of Fact, then the Argument would have been irrefragable; but forasmuch as we see no such things in the present times, why should we be so credulous as to believe there ever were? Assoil me this Difficulty clearly and substantially, and it will go a great Way with me; for I acknowledge (as you observe) that if this Argument be sound, the Influence of it extends farther than the present Question, and to be sure will leave no doubt that there is a God.

The great Objection against Providence is, that there are no Miracles to be seen now.

Sebast.

Sebaſt. I am very ſenſible of the Importance of your Objection, and of the Neceſſity that a ſufficient Anſwer be made to it; yet I do not, in the leaſt, doubt but you will find it in the following Particulars, by that time you have laid them together.

A full Anſwer to the aforeſaid Objection.

Firſt, I ſuppoſe you will grant me that there can be no Need of, or Reaſon for God's diſplaying himſelf by Miracles or a Spirit of Prophecy in the preſent Age, for the Aſſurance of a Providence; if ſo be we may be ſufficiently ſecured, that he hath indubitably given thoſe Evidences already in former Ages: For he that hath once ſufficient Grounds given him to believe ſuch a Point, hath always an Obligation upon him to believe that thing without repeated Proofs of it. And it is unreaſonable to expect that God almighty ſhould be bound to exert his Omnipotency, or any Way put out of Courſe the Order of natural Cauſes, merely for the Gratification of Men's Curioſity or Fancy, but only for the Satisfaction of their Reaſon in ſo important a Point.

Then, Secondly, In the next Place I will ſhew you that (bating merely the gratifying of Curioſity and Fancy as aforeſaid) we may have as credible and ſufficient Aſſurance of a Miracle, or other extraordinary Paſſage of Providence which was done many Ages agone, as we could have if ſuch a thing was to be done in the preſent Age. This will perhaps ſeem a little ſtrange to you at firſt, but your Wonder will abate when you conſider theſe two things:

1. That it cannot be expected that God ſhould ſo far comply with the Humour of Men, as to work Miracles every Day, and in the Sight of every Man. Miracles are a kind of Parentheſis in the ordinary Courſe of Nature, or, as it were, a

ſhort Digreſſion from the uſual Method of things. Now if ſuch Digreſſions ſhould be daily made, it would be, in a manner, a total ſuperſeding of the ordinary Courſe of Nature; and ſo inſtead of ſerving the particular Turn or Humour of ſome Men, the whole Race of Mankind would be deprived of a greater and more remarkable Miracle than all the other put together; namely, that of the ſtable and conſtant Courſe of Nature. And ſuch frequent Irregularities as muſt follow upon that Conceſſion, would put a very great Temptation upon Men to ſuſpect that there was no conſtant Law or Rule in the Creation, but that chance carried all before it; which would make an Objection indeed againſt Providence. And yet it is certain that notwithſtanding this horrible Miſchief ſo it muſt be done, if every particular Man muſt have his Eyes Witneſſes of Miracles before he believes them. For it is plain that if God ſhould vouchſafe one or more Miracles to the preſent Age, it could not be done before every Man; and therefore ſome of them, if they will believe a Providence upon that Account, muſt truſt to other Men's Eyes for the Grounds of their Belief.

The Demand of daily and frequent Miracles is very abſurd.

And thus we ſee it was in thoſe Times and Places where Miracles were moſt frequent, as ſuppoſe in the Time of our Saviour; thoſe mighty Works which he wrought whilſt he was upon Earth, and even his Reſurrection it ſelf, were not obvious to the Eyes of all Men, but only to ſo many as might render them ſufficiently credible by their Teſtimony; and as for the Generality, they muſt content themſelves *to believe without ſeeing*, *St.* John 20. 29. as he himſelf told them.

2. If God ſhould ſo far condeſcend to the Incredulity of Men, as to permit generally their

Ancient Miracles are as credible as thoſe that are pre-

their Eyes and Senſes to be Witneſſes of ſuch extraordinary Paſſages of Providence as we ſpeak of, it would not have ſuch Succeſs as you imagine; for there would not want Objections againſt this alſo. Some would then ſuſpect their very Senſes, or ſay that either their Imaginations were deluded, or elſe it may be all was done by natural Cauſes, tho' perhaps they did not well underſtand them, or at leaſt would conclude that which appears to be a Miracle was merely an Accident, and ſo there is no Account to be ſought or given of it. Thus we know the greateſt Miracles that ever were wrought have been ſhifted off, and eluded even in the times wherein they were done, and by thoſe Men that ſaw them. But now when thoſe things that I make the Inſtances of a Providence, (the ancient Miracles I mean) have undergone the teſt of time, and been canvaſſed and diſcuſſed in ſeveral Ages, and yet no Flaw is found in them: In this Caſe, I ſay, we have more full Ground for our Belief, than if the things had been freſh before our Eyes; for that ſame incredulous Humour which now objects againſt the Credit of things becauſe they were done long ago, would find out as good a Trick to put upon a preſent Miracle, (if it was to be had) namely, ſuch a Man would ſay, (and with more Colour of Reaſon) that though I cannot detect the Cheat of this for the preſent, yet time may diſcover it, which cannot be ſaid in the other Caſe.

ſent, and in ſome Reſpects more certain.

But, Thirdly and laſtly, I add to all aforeſaid, that tho' it is true, that all Ages are not alike illuſtrated with ſuch prodigious Acts of Providence as are properly and ſtrictly call'd Miracles, yet there is no time of the World wherein there are not very plainly the Prints of

The preſent times not deſtitute of marks of Providence.

Divinity, and evidences of a Providence continually preſiding over the World, if Man do not humourſomly deſpiſe them (for want of the pompous Circumſtances of Miracles) or ſtupidly overlook them, becauſe of their commonneſs and frequency; ſuch as (for Example) the preſerving the ſeveral Species of things in the World; that amongſt that vaſt multitude of the kinds of Birds, or Inſects, *&c.* and their ſeveral enmities to one another, and the many Accidents all of them are expoſed to, there ſhould notwithſtanding in ſo long a tract of Time, not be any one kind of them loſt or extinguiſhed.

That the Holy Scriptures and Chriſtian Religion ſhould be upheld in ſpight of the Combination of Wit and Ignorance, Power and Malice againſt them.

That Civil Government ſhould be preſerved againſt all the Intereſt of reſolvedly wicked Men, and againſt all the brutiſh Violence of the inraged *Mobile*.

Beſides the remarkable Infatuation of the Counſels, diſcovering the Plots, and defeating the Deſigns of Crafty and Atheiſtical Politicians; and frequent Terrors upon the Conſciences, and damps upon the Spirits of the moſt deſperate and flagitious Men, and the aſſiſting, animating and comforting the Hearts of good Men in their greateſt Agonies and moſt difficult Undertakings. Some of theſe things I mentioned before in our former Conference, and all of them are ſuch as happen in every Age, and are never the leſs evidences of Providence for being ordinary.

Indeed it may and doth fall out that now and then things happen quite otherwiſe, as that Conſpiracies of wicked Men are ſucceſsful, *&c.* and God Almighty ſeems to order it ſo on purpoſe becauſe he will not be traced in his Methods, and becauſe

becauſe he will leave ſome trials of Mens willingneſs to believe in him and depend upon him: But the other courſe is ſo uſual, and things often fall out ſo patly that way, that it muſt be extreme humorouſneſs to deny a Providence in them.

But, beſides all theſe, there is one thing more comes now to my Mind, which is indeed beyond all the forementioned, and ſeems to be ſet up on purpoſe by divine Providence, as a ſtanding Monument of it ſelf to all Ages, and that is the preſent Condition of the *Jews*.

They were once a great and flouriſhing Kingdom, and fortunate beyond all Example; but now from the time that they grew incurably wicked and rebellious, againſt the God that had ſo ſignally bleſſed them, and had to all their other Impieties crucified the Saviour of the World; they have now (I ſay) for the ſpace of ſixteen or ſeventeen hundred Years, been *like the Field which God hath curſed*, and been the moſt prodigious inſtance of Unhappineſs that ever was in the World. Foraſmuch as though they are ſtill vaſtly numerous, a cunning, crafty and projecting ſort of People, yet they are every where ſcattered through all Nations, but every where under Marks of Infamy, and no where able to become a People, ſo as to live under Laws and a Government of their own: Notwithſtanding all which, and which is the wonder of all, they keep up their Stock and Pedigree with the greateſt exactneſs imaginable, as if God intended (as certainly he did) by all this to ſet them forth as a lively inſtance both of his juſt Providence, and of the truth of the Spirit of Prophecy in the Holy Scriptures. And now this, together with the foregoing inſtances, I think, affords ſufficient evidence that God doth not now neglect the World, and leave all to run in the

Road of natural Cauſes, but even in theſe latter Ages as well as formerly gives ſome ſignal Strokes of an over-ruling hand; which was the thing to be proved. And thus the two firſt Principles of Religion are ſecured. What think you, *Biophilus?* deal plainly, and if you have any thing farther to ſay to the contrary, propound it.

Bioph. Truly, I have nothing very material to ſay farther.

Sebaſt. Then God be thanked we have now gained two Feet for Religion to ſtand upon; namely, we have a God to whom it is due, and we have an Obligation from the Conſideration of his Providence, to make all the World careful and obſervant of him; at leaſt ſo far as any part of the Creation is capable of ſuch a Duty.

Bioph. Very right; but I remember you ſaid, That to lay the Foundation of Religion effectually, there muſt be conſideration alſo of the Subjects of it; and it muſt appear in particular, that Mankind is under a capacity of the aforeſaid Obligation, and of paying and performing this Duty towards the divine Majeſty accordingly. Now as for this, tho' I foreſee no difficulty in the Caſe, yet however, I pray, expreſs your ſelf a little more fully about it, leſt I ſhould be under any miſtake.

The third Principle of Religion, that Man is a Subject capable of it.

Sebaſt. The bottom of this third point is no more but this: To make Mankind a Subject capable of the Obligations of Religion, theſe three things are requiſite.

1. That he be able in ſome meaſure to judge what Carriage from himſelf is fit and decent towards God.

2. That he be a free Agent, and have it in his choice and power to determine himſelf towards the performance of what he underſtands

to be fit and decent, or towards the contrary if he will.

3. That he be able to reflect upon what he hath done, ſo as to accuſe and condemn, or to acquit and juſtifie himſelf accordingly as his Actions and Carriage towards the Deity have been agreeable or diſagreeable to the judgment aforeſaid.

The firſt of theſe Powers and Capacities is commonly called *Underſtanding*; the ſecond, *Will* or *Freedom of Choice*; and the third is known by the Name of *Conſcience*.

Without the firſt of theſe, namely, if Mankind had not *Underſtanding* to diſcern the difference of things, and ſome Rule within him whereby to judge of moral Good and Evil, he would be lawleſs and brutiſh, having no other meaſures to go by, than his Paſſions and Senſe.

Without the ſecond, namely, If he had not *Freedom of Will* to determine himſelf towards Good and Evil, as he pleaſed, he muſt then be under a fatal neceſſity of doing whatſoever he ſhould happen to do; and then as he could give no proof of his Temper and Inclination, ſo there could be no ſuch thing as acceptableneſs to God when he did well, nor blameableneſs when he did otherwiſe; becauſe there could be no ſuch things as Virtue or Vice in his Caſe; and conſequently no more room for either Rewards or Puniſhments, than there is in the motion of Plants or Stones, or any other the moſt inſenſible things.

Without the third and laſt, *viz.* If Mankind had not ſuch a Faculty in him as we call *Conſcience*, ſo as to reflect upon his own Actions and Carriage, and by virtue of which he either applauds and juſtifies himſelf when he hath obeyed the beſt reaſon of his Mind, or upbraids and ſcourges himſelf whenſoever he hath done other-

wiſe, he could neither have any ſpur to Virtue, nor check upon Vice, and conſequently would have no regard what uſe he made of his Liberty.

But by all theſe together (if they appear to be inherent in human Nature) Mankind is fully qualified for the Obligations of Religion.

Now looking over the World as far as we can, we find no Creature that we converſe with, to be endowed with theſe Faculties but our ſelves, and then looking into our ſelves we find by undeniable experience that we have every one of the aforeſaid Capacities in our Nature: And hence I conclude that Man, and Man only of all Creatures, (in the viſible World) is the Subject of Religion. And this I called the third Fundamental Principle of Religion; not that I take it to be properly and ſtrictly ſo, but in regard it is manifeſt by what hath been ſaid, that there can be no ſure ground for Religion without it.

And thus, I think, I have fully anſwered your demand concerning the ground-work of Religion, and laid out a Foundation both large enough and ſtrong enough to bear the whole ſtructure. And now I hope you will ſee no cauſe to ſuſpect it to be a mere melancholy Fancy, or politick Stratagem, the reſult of Education, or effect of Weakneſs and Fear, but the moſt manly and rational thing that any Man can concern himſelf about.

Bioph. I confeſs you have done as you ſay, *Sebaſtian*, and I thank you heartily for it. It is true, I could ſtill have found out ſomething or other to have replied, but I promiſed you I would not uſe mere Subterfuges and diſingenuous Shifts, and I find without them there is nothing to be ſaid farther in the Caſe: ſo that in plain *Engliſh* I muſt profeſs I cannot tell whether more to admire, you or my ſelf, pardon the Expreſſion; I mean, whether

ther more to be aſhamed of my own Stupidity, that have thus laugh'd in my ſleeve at Religion; or your Prudence that firſt hedg'd me in with your Preliminary Demands, that my Mind could not rove from the Point, and then purſued me with cloſe Arguments, that I have no way to eſcape. In ſhort, I am convinced ſo far, that Religion is a thing diligently to be heeded, and carefully enquir'd into: I pray therefore, leave me not in the Briars you have brought me into, but as you have diſcover'd to me the Foundations, ſo tell me what Superſtructures muſt be made upon them. In the firſt place, what do you mean by Religion?

A general Deſcription of Religion.

Sebaſt. *By Religion in general I underſtand nothing elſe but a ſerious ſtudy to know God, together with a careful endeavour to pleaſe him and procure his Favour.* This is that which not only the ſeveral Sects of Chriſtians mean by Religion, but is that which all Men of Senſe, and even the better ſort of *Pagans* themſelves agree in.

Bioph. By the eaſineſs of your Expreſſion, and the few Words you have made uſe of in this Deſcription, one would think the buſineſs it ſelf was more eaſie than I doubt I ſhall find it to be: But, I pray, however, conſider me as an Ideot and a Stranger to this matter, and condeſcend to explain your ſelf more particularly; and firſt give me leave to ask you what you mean by the knowing of God? Do you intend any thing more than the acknowledgment that there is a God?

Sebaſt. Yes, *Biophilus*, I here underſtand a great deal more by the knowing of God than I did in all our former Diſcourſe. Whilſt we were only laying the Foundations of Religion, there indeed no more was required than to acknowledge his Being, and that becauſe (as then I ſhew'd you) therein

therein lies the first reason of such a thing as we call Religion. For there is nothing to oblige a Man to have any regard to himself, nor to make any difference of his Actions, till he acknowledge such a Being as hath a Sovereignty over him, and to whom he is accountable for his Carriage. But now when that is resolved of, then there arises a twofold occasion of studying farther to know the God which he acknowledges to be.

The necessity of studying to know the divine Nature.

Namely, First, Because it cannot but appear a point of great decency and regard towards this acknowledged Sovereign of the World, that we employ our Minds, the noblest powers we have, in the study and contemplation of him; and indeed to do otherwise is not only unmanly, but an argument of such Contempt as is not consistent with the real persuasion of such a Being as God.

Again, Secondly, Forasmuch as by the bare acknowledgment that there is a God, we see reason to make a difference of things, and to have a care of our Actions with respect to him; so now when we are come to that, it will farther concern us in particular to have some Rule and Measure to govern our selves by, and whereby to make a distinction of Good and Evil, to the end that we may please him in what we do; and that is only attainable by serious study of the divine Nature, Attributes, and such declarations of his Mind and Will as he hath made.

For you must know that it is not every thing whatsoever we may fansy, that will please him: For then all Religions would be alike true and safe, and none but Atheists and Hypocrites could miscarry. But it is certain God hath a Mind of his own, and that Devotion or Observance only pleases him which is agreeable to him; all o-

ther

ther is fooliſh Superſtition, and at beſt but loſt labour.

Bioph. But I hope, after all, you do not intend to repreſent the Deity as a touchy and humourſome kind of Being; for then conſequently, Religion muſt needs be the moſt anxious thing in the World, and far from what you have hitherto made me believe it was.

Sebaſt. God forbid, *Biophilus*, that ſuch a thought of the divine Majeſty ſhould enter into any Man's Heart, or that I ſhould be guilty of miſrepreſenting Religion at that rate. As for God himſelf, he is certainly nothing elſe but wiſe and great Goodneſs, too great to be fondly taken with little things, and too wiſe and good to be offended with little things; and therefore Religion cannot conſiſt in Niceties and Punctilio's, as if it was the ſervile Flattery of a Tyrant; and not the ingenuous Service of loyal Subjects to a brave and generous Prince. Notwithſtanding, as I ſaid before, he hath a Mind and Will of his own, and expects that ſhould be complied with if we intend to procure his Favour.

The neceſſity of ſtudying to know the divine Will as well as his Nature.

Bioph. But is it not enough that a Man live well and virtuouſly, and ſerve God devoutly? Will not that pleaſe and propitiate him to us?

Sebaſt. Yes doubtleſs it will, but ſtill you muſt have a Rule and a Standard for all that; otherwiſe there will be no real difference of Virtue and Vice, nor no diſtinction between Superſtition and Devotion.

Bioph. Now am I in a Wilderneſs, when I thought my ſelf even at *Canaan*.

Sebaſt. Why, what's the matter, *Biophilus*? Could you think that mere good meaning or any kind of blind Devotion would ſerve the turn? Or

that Man might preſcribe to his Maker what he ſhould be pleaſed withal?

Bioph. The matter is plainly this, *Sebaſtian:* I perceive that if a Man have a mind to be Religious, he ſhall be at a loſs which way to take, and what to do. His own Conſcience, you ſay, is not a ſufficient Guide for him, becauſe that may be miſtaken, and therefore he muſt have a Rule: Well, to come by this Rule, he muſt, ſay you, ſtudy to know God's Nature, and that is not enough, but God hath a Mind and Will of his own, and that muſt be known too; and that's not all neither, for he may alter his Mind, and then we are at a worſe loſs than ever: If therefore this be the ſtate of the Caſe, it is to no purpoſe to think or talk farther of this buſineſs.

Sebaſt. Come, cheer up, Man, there is no danger of all this you dream of, this ſeeming difficulty will preſently clear up, by that time I have told you, that God's Mind and Nature are ſo entirely the ſame, that whatſoever is agreeable to his Nature cannot be contradicted by any Act of his Will; and whatſoever is the expreſs of his Will, is alſo a true Copy of his Nature (at leaſt in the general.) And therefore if we perfectly underſtood the divine Nature, there would be no need that he ſhould make any declaration of his Will; for then it would be the only inſtance of Religion to imitate and endeavour to reſemble him, which is the trueſt honour that can be done to him, and conſequently could not fail to pleaſe him. But now foraſmuch as we neither do nor can perfectly underſtand his Nature, becauſe it is too great and too ſublime for us to take a full view of it; therefore it is that we ſtand in need of the declaration of his Will for our guide in his ſervice.

The meaſures of Devotion are partly the divine Nature, and partly his Will.

Bioph.

Biopb. If this be ſo (as it ſeems reaſonable enough) then why did you ſpeak of his Nature in this Caſe, ſeeing the buſineſs lies in the ſtudying of the divine Will; at leaſt, if there be any ſuch thing as a declaration of it which may be come at?

Sebaſt. The reaſon of my making mention both of the divine Nature and the divine Will to you in this Caſe, will become as evident to you as any thing we have diſcourſed of, by that time you have conſidered theſe two things.

Firſt, That foraſmuch as natural light (which is the common Principle of Mankind) can make ſome diſcovery of the Nature of God to us, but little or nothing of his Will; therefore it is neceſſary, that ſuch as have not divine Revelation, ſhould by the uſe of Reaſon ſtudy the divine Nature for their guidance in the mean time.

Again, Secondly, It is very conſiderable, that even thoſe that live under the advantage of divine Revelation, may be impoſed upon by counterfeit Oracles, and ſuch as falſely pretend to be diſcoverers of the Will of God, if they do not well ſtudy the divine Nature, by the knowledge of which they may be able to detect ſuch Frauds and Impoſtures. For if a Doctrine be broached in the World, that is contrary to the natural and reaſonable Notions Men have of God, although ſuch Doctrine pretend never ſo much to Divinity; nay, if it ſhould ſeem to have the ſame miraculous Atteſtation to it that the Goſpel it ſelf hath; we may and ought to reject it upon this account, that we are ſure nothing can come from God which contradicts himſelf, nor can there be any declaration of his Will, which is contrary to the known meaſures of his Nature. And therefore the Nature of God, as well as the Will of God,

See Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3, &c.

*

God, is to be ſtudied and attended to, as our Rule in this great affair of Religon.

Bioph. Now I think I underſtand you thus far; and if I be not miſtaken, then I have two great things ſtill to ask your aſſiſtance in: 1. That you will help me to underſtand the divine Nature. 2. That you will direct me how I may come to the knowledge of his Will: By which two together I find I muſt be enabled both to pleaſe him and procure his favour. And firſt I pray explain the Nature of God to me.

Sebaſt. I know you are a wiſer Man than to expect from me that I ſhould give you a perfect definition of the divine Majeſty; for by what hath been ſaid already, you cannot but be ſenſible of the vanity and impoſſibility of ſuch an attempt on my part, and conſequently of the abſurdity of ſuch a demand on yours. But if your deſire be (as I ſuppoſe it is) that I ſhould repreſent God to you under ſuch Expreſſions as that we may underſtand one another what we mean when we ſpeak of him, and alſo may ſufficiently diſtinguiſh him from all other Beings; then I doubt not to give you ſatisfaction.

A Deſcription of the divine Nature.

Bioph. I ask you no more but what you promiſe, ſaving that I expect alſo that your Deſcription of him ſhould not only render him a fit Object of Religion, but alſo in ſome meaſure a Rule for it too, according to what you laſt diſcourſed.

Sebaſt. I underſtand you, and why may not theſe few Words ſatisfie you, *viz. God is an Infinite and Eternal Spirit.*

Bioph. Ah, *Sebaſtian!* The Words are few indeed, but they are ſuch as will put you to the expence of a great many more before I ſhall underſtand

ſtand them; every Word is a Myſtery, *Spirit*, *Eternal*, *Infinite*.

Sebaſt. Be of good courage, *Biophilus*, for tho' I foretold you we ſhould never be able fully to comprehend the divine Majeſty, yet with a little patience and attention you ſhall find thoſe Phraſes very intelligible, and neither to be nonſenſe or gibberiſh, nor cramp-words to conceal a conceited Ignorance under, as your old Friends the *Epicureans* are wont to call them.

Bioph. I confeſs you have not diſappointed me hitherto, and therefore I will not deſpair, nor do I intend any longer to diſpute with you, but to learn of you; therefore, I pray, in the firſt place, tell me plainly and intelligibly what a Spirit is, and what you mean when you ſay, *God is a Spirit?*

The word [Spirit] *explain'd, and the nature of the thing.*

Sebaſt. You may remember, that what you now demand was the Subject of part of our former Conference, wherein I endeavoured to ſettle the notion of a Spirit, and not only to convince you of the neceſſity of acknowledging ſuch a kind of Being, but alſo to poſſeſs you with ſome apprehenſions of the nature of it; and therefore, I hope, I ſhall not need to go over that again. But now, when I call God a Spirit, I mean neither more or leſs than this, namely, That *he is an underſtanding, free and powerful Subſtance, which yet is not viſible, nor can fall under the notice of our bodily Senſes*; this, I take it, is the proper notion of a Spirit.

V. Conf. 2. *from Page* 160. *to Page* 163.

In the firſt Place, I call a Spirit a *Subſtance*, that you may be ſure I mean not a Spectre or Phantom (as your Friends uſe to ſuſpect) but ſomething which is as real as Matter or Body it ſelf.

And

And yet, in the ſecond Place, to diſtinguiſh it from Matter or bodily Subſtance, I ſay, it is *not viſible*, nor can fall under the Notice of our bodily Senſes, as that other kind of Subſtance doth, or at leaſt is ſuppoſed to do.

And then, in the laſt Place, to ſhew you that this is no Contradiction, and to deliver you from the Prejudice of Senſe, I repreſent to you the Effects and Operations of a Spirit which are ſuch as muſt needs argue it to be a Subſtance, and an excellent one too; namely, that it hath Power to move the Matter wherein it reſides, and alſo hath Underſtanding, and Will or Choice, which Matter is incapable of.

So that look what that thing which we call a Soul is in our ſelves, that doth this Notion of Spirit imply God to be to the whole World; namely, as by that we move our Bodies, and underſtand a Reaſon for, and can give check to our own Motion, ſo doth God preſide over the World.

Bioph. I acknowledge you have delivered a conſiſtent notion of ſuch a thing as a Spirit, and therefore I ſee no impoſſibility that there ſhould be ſuch a thing. But how doth it appear that there is really and actually ſuch a thing as a Spirit, or that if there be a God, he muſt needs be a Spirit?

Sebaſt. The reaſon is very plain by what hath been ſaid already, when I proved to you the exiſtence of a God. For there it was confeſs'd on both hands, that ſomething muſt be eternal, or nothing could have been at all; and then I demonſtrated that Matter could not be that eternal Being, therefore it muſt be Spirit or nothing that gave Beginning to things, and conſequently this thing Spirit is not only a conſiſtent Notion, but a neceſſary Reality, and God is that Spirit.

Beſides,

Beſides, to convince you of this the more effectually, let me mind you of what, I think, I have heretofore obſerved, *viz.* That we find in our ſelves ſomething which not only moves and acts our Bodies, but alſo ſometimes bears hard againſt them, croſſes and controuls them in their Intereſts and Inclinations. Now ſurely that which doth ſo, muſt needs be ſomething of an higher and different Nature from them, and is no other than that kind of ſpiritual Being which we call a Soul; and ſo you have another and more obvious Evidence of the actual Exiſtence of a ſpiritual Subſtance.

The Uſefulneſs of acknowledging God to be a ſpiritual Subſtance.

Bioph. I apprehend you; but, I pray, excuſe me one Queſtion more on this Point, and that is, What is the Importance of this to Religion? Or of what Influence will the Acknowledgment of God to be a Spirit have upon the ruling and directing a Man in his Devotion towards him?

Sebaſt. The Belief that God is a Spirit is of very great Conſequence to Religion upon ſeveral Accounts.

Partly as it obliges us to be very ſincere, hearty and inward in all our Devotions to him, and not think to put him off with Outſides and Complements: For ſeeing *he is a Spirit, he will be worſhipped in Spirit and Truth*, John 4. 24.

Partly alſo as it renders it evident to us, that neither the Sound of Words, nor any peculiar Poſture, Ceremony, or other ſuch like childiſh Trifles can of themſelves be acceptable to him who is a great and a wiſe Spirit, no nor yet the Fat of Beaſts, nor the Odours of ſweet Incenſe, nor Gold, nor Silver, nor any of thoſe things that are admitted among Men; but leaſt of all ſuch ſenſual and laſcivious Rites as were in uſe among the Pagans: For as none of the former can be ſuitable

Oblations to ſuch a pure Being; ſo it is certain thoſe laſt named can only befit an impure Spirit, ſuch an one as the Devil is.

But principally, as it convinces us of the Vanity and Impiety of making Images of God, or of thinking to do Honour to him by the uſe of them in his Worſhip, ſince he being a ſpiritual Subſtance can by no means be repreſented by them, but muſt needs be debaſed and render'd much meaner to our Thoughts than he is by ſuch Repreſentations: And therefore we find, that not only the Holy Scripture in the Books both of the Old and New Teſtament, utterly condemns ſuch Uſages as idolatrous and abominable to him; but we may alſo obſerve that amongſt the Pagans themſelves, all thoſe who arrived at this Notion, that God was a Spirit, rejected Image-Worſhip, and thought that of the Mind and Spirit to be only acceptable to him.

To all which add, that the Belief of the ſpiritual Nature of God enables us more eaſily to conceive of the Greatneſs of his Power, and that it is eaſy to him to mind and govern the World without Trouble or Wearineſs to himſelf, and with the greater Advantage to us. For it is not imaginable that a perfectly immaterial Subſtance ſhould be ſenſible of any Laſſitude or Decay; and thus the Belief of God's being a Spirit, confirms our Truſt in his divine Providence, which is the prime Spring and Motive of Devotion.

Bioph. I am abundantly ſatisfied that God is a Spirit, and that he ought to be ſo acknowledged. Now proceed, in the next Place, to tell me what you mean when you ſay he is eternal.

Of God's Eternity, and the Neceſſity of acknowledging it.

Sebaſt. By God's being an eternal Spirit, I mean, that as he had no Beginning, ſo he can have no End of his Being, and that

*

that becauſe (as I ſhewed you) he is neceſſarily, or could not but be; for we agreed even now that ſuch an Excellency of Being muſt be allowed to ſomething or other, or elſe nothing could have been at all; and I made it plain, that it could not be attributed to the World, or any part of it, and therefore muſt be due to God.

Bioph. I ſee I might have ſaved you the Trouble of that Queſtion, yet you will excuſe it ſince it leads me to another, which I cannot ſo well reſolve without your Help, *viz.* of what moment is it to Religion, whether God be acknowledged to be eternal or not?

Sebaſt. Oh! Of very great moment; for, in the firſt Place, this being acknowledged we are thereby aſſured that all the inferior Gods of the Gentiles, or whatſoever were either ſuppoſed to be born, or to have a Beginning, or to die, or decline in Power and Divinity, could not be Gods, but the Idols of fooliſh and deluded Men; and at the ſame time we are as certain that the true God can neither do, nor be capable of any Hurt or Detriment, no nor of any Change, but ever remains immutably the ſame: For whatſoever is liable to change, may alſo ceaſe to be.

Again, Upon the Conſideration of God's Eternity depends a great Obligation to Religion, foraſmuch as by this means he hath it always in his Power to reward or puniſh Men according to their Demerit, wherein conſiſts a great Secret of his Providence, namely, the Reaſon of his Patience and Long-ſuffering, that he doth not preſently execute Vengeance upon wicked Men, nor, on the other ſide, immediately deliver good Men out of the Troubles and Injuries they meet with in this World, becauſe he hath it always in his Power to do it, and if he do it not in this World, will be ſure to do it in the next.

To both which may be added, That although the Notion of Eternity of time to come be a great Deep into which we cannot look without Giddineſs and Diſturbance, yet we may be certain there is ſuch a thing, becauſe we are ſure that God cannot ceaſe to be, no more than he began to be; and therefore the Solicitude which is in Men about what is to come after their Deaths, is not the Effect of Timidity and Weakneſs (as you ſometime ſuſpected) but a rational and well-grounded Prudence, as I then told you.

Bioph. But yet there is one very difficult thing remains to be explained, namely, what do you mean when you ſay God is an infinite Spirit?

God's Infinity explained, and the Uſe of believing it.

Sebaſt. By that I mean, that whereas all other Beings (as well ſpiritual as material) which are not neceſſarily, or which might not have been, muſt conſequently, whenſoever they come into Being, depend upon him, who hath being in himſelf, and ſo be limited and circumſcribed by him; that is, they can have but only ſuch a certain Portion of Power, Life and Underſtanding as he hath allotted them: On the contrary, he that was before all things, and the Cauſe of all things, and who could not but be, muſt needs be unlimited in all kind of Perfections, foraſmuch as there was nothing before him, to limit him, nothing equal to him to rival him, nothing after him to intrench upon him, and conſequently all conceivable Perfection muſt be eſſentially in him; that is, he muſt be moſt powerful, moſt wiſe, moſt juſt, and moſt good, *&c.*

Bioph. I think I need not ask you of what Importance this laſt Point is to Religion, for (as dull as I am) I am aware that this Attribute of the Deity renders him the Object of our Admiration, Fear, Truſt, and all other Inſtances of Devotion.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. It is very true, *Biophilus*; and beſides, by Virtue of this Infinity he can be preſent to all Places to take Notice of all Paſſages; he can eaſily accompliſh whatſoever he promiſes or threatens, he can be ſtraiten'd in nothing, nor need any thing, having all things in himſelf, and conſequently of that, it is impoſſible to conceive of him as a ſtingy, narrow-hearted Being that can envy or malign his Creatures, but contrariwiſe, he muſt be unſpeakably good, and take Delight in nothing more than in communicating of his own Fulneſs to them.

But that which I would eſpecially remark, is this, That a Being, infinite in Goodneſs, Wiſdom, *&c.* as aforeſaid, can never be the Author of abſurd, or harſh and impoſſible Laws; for any ſuch would be a Contradiction to the aforenamed Perfections of his Nature: And therefore as we have upon this Account great Obligations to ſerve him chearfully; ſo we may aſſure our ſelves that whatſoever pretends to be a divine Law, and can be made appear to be inhumanely rigorous, or intolerably difficult to be obſerved, is either no Law of his, or at the leaſt it is not rightly interpreted.

And thus, I hope, I have in ſome Meaſure explained to you the Nature of God, and alſo led you to obſerve the main Strokes of Piety or the Laws of natural Religion towards him, deducible from thoſe Principles: And you your ſelf by attentive Conſideration, may be able to deduce many others of like Nature. What other Service do you now command me?

Bioph. After hearty Thanks, good *Sebaſtian*, for the mild and candid Treatment you have given me all along, which together with that Clearneſs of Reaſon which ſhines out in your Diſcourſe, have made me perfectly yours, I would in the next Place requeſt of you (if I be not too importunately troubleſome) that you will in like manner diſ-

courſe to me of the divine Will, as you have done of his Nature; that ſo I may be more fully inſtructed in this great Buſineſs.

Sebaſt. I ſhall never think it troubleſome, or unſeaſonable to ſerve you in ſuch an Affair as this; but, *Biophilus*, if we ſhould go no farther, and that I had nothing to ſay concerning divine Revelation, yet you ſee we have enough already to render Religion not only worthy of a prudent Man's Care, but to be the moſt reaſonable and neceſſary thing in the whole World: So that Atheiſm with all its Boaſts of Wit and extraordinary Sagacity, and Scepticiſm too with all its Caution and Reſervedneſs, are quite beaten out of the Field.

Bioph. I acknowledge it, good *Sebaſtian*, with Glory to God, and Shame enough to my ſelf.

Sebaſt. God be thanked for this gentle Thaw, and the Proſpect we have of a fruitful Seaſon after the cold Weather.

Bioph. I obſerve no Change in the Air; but however, good *Sebaſtian*, let not the Thoughts of that divert you from what we were upon.

Sebaſt. Never fear it, Sir, I am mindful of you, and glad to ſee you ſo earneſtly inquiſitive after that you was ſo cold towards, and ſo incurious of heretofore. But what was you about to ſay?

Concerning the Knowledge of the divine Will.

Bioph. I remember you ſaid that humane Reaſon was too ſhort to be a Standard for God almighty, and that if it was poſſible for us perfectly to underſtand the divine Nature (which we cannot) yet ſince he is a free Agent, and hath a Mind of his own, and will not be preſcribed to by us, it is neceſſary in order to the pleaſing and propitiating him towards our ſelves, that we ſhould ſome Way or other be more particularly inſtructed concerning his Will and Pleaſure: Now therefore my Deſire is (if it be poſſible)

to

to be aſcertained of the divine Will, that I may know how to carry my ſelf agreeably thereunto.

Sebaſt. It is a worthy Reſolution of yours, and a very noble Enquiry that hath taken Riſe from thence, and let me add, it is ſuch an Enquiry as you may juſtly expect Satisfaction in: For ſince natural Reaſon and Induſtry cannot give us ſufficient Light in the Caſe, it is not conſiſtent with the divine Goodneſs to leave Men deſtitute of ſome certain way of Information, what he requires and expects from them: And that it is poſſible for God to ſupply that Defect of our Underſtanding, there can be no doubt, ſince it cannot be imagined that almighty Power and Wiſdom ſhould ever want means to expreſs his Senſe to the Sons of Men, or to aſſure them that ſuch is indeed his Mind without all Danger of Impoſture or Deluſion.

Bioph. By what I now underſtand of the divine Nature, I cannot but grant it very poſſible for God to do ſo; and I inſiſt upon the Fitneſs and Reaſonableneſs that ſome ſuch thing ſhould be done; But I enquire where it is done, and how may a Man have Recourſe to it?

Sebaſt. Firſt let me ask you what Ways are there imaginable that might give you or any other Man Satisfaction in this Caſe; and what are thoſe you could think fit for God to make uſe of to this Purpoſe?

Several Ways of divine Revelation.

Bioph. I could think of ſeveral Ways whereby God might, if he pleaſe, make known his Mind to Men, namely, I doubt not but he can, if he will, ſpeak from Heaven in an audible Voice, ſo that we ſhall hear him as we hear one another; or if he thought good to condeſcend ſo far he could perſonally appear in the World, and inſtruct Men in what he requires of them; again, he could ſingly apply himſelf to particular Perſons, and by ſome

ſecret Operations of his, inſtil his Mind into their Hearts; or to name no more, he could guide the Thoughts and Hands of ſome certain Men whilſt they committed his Will to Writing, which ſhould be a Record and Digeſt of the divine Laws to all Ages of the World.

Sebaſt. Very good: Then I hope it will abundantly ſatisfy you, if I ſhew you that God hath not only made uſe of ſome one or other of theſe Ways you mention, but hath by all and every one of them notified his Pleaſure at ſome time or other to the Sons of Men.

As for Inſtance, in the firſt Ages of the World before there were any divine Laws ſettled for the Conduct of Men's Lives, it was not unuſual with the divine Majeſty to give particular Intimations of his Mind, eſpecially in ſuch Caſes as the uſe of natural Reaſon could not extend to; and thoſe that were extraordinary good Men, had very frequent Experience of this in thoſe ancient times, and even the better Sort of Heathens were not deſtitute of ſuch ſpecial Diſcoveries of God's Will (amongſt other Occaſions to ſupply the Defects of humane Reaſon in divine things) and there is nothing more known and acknowledged amongſt them than this.

And then it is alſo certain, that though God as a Spirit hath properly no Voice of his own, yet he hath ſeveral times framed a Voice, and cauſed it to be heard from Heaven as his; the famous Inſtance whereof was at the giving of Laws to the *Jewiſh* Nation from Mount *Sinai*; nor have later times (no not amongſt the *Pagans* themſelves) been altogether left without ſuch prodigious Diſcoveries of the divine Will, unleſs we call in queſtion the Credit of all their Writings.

But for God's condeſcending to come himſelf into the World, and to inſtruct Men in ſuch things as are agreeable to his Will, this was moſt glori-

ouſly

ouſly verified in the Converſation of our Saviour *Chriſt Jeſus* in humane Nature upon Earth, who had all the Atteſtations to his Divinity that could be deſired, both in the Wonders of his Birth, the Miracles of his Life, and the Glories of his Reſurrection, but eſpecially in the frequent and humble Miniſtry of Angels to him as occaſion ſerved. And he familiarly and fully interpreted the Mind of God to Men; and the more to awaken the Attention of Mankind to him, a Voice from Heaven alſo attended his Entrance on this Office, *Matthew* 3. 17.

And then in the laſt Place, for God's declaring his Mind to us by the Miniſtry of Men, this he hath abundantly done in the Books of Holy Scripture, which as they were dictated by himſelf to thoſe holy Men that compoſed them, ſo they have been carefully preſerved by his ſpecial Providence from the Changes and Corruption that all humane things are liable to, that ſo they might convey his Pleaſure to all Perſons, Climates and Ages of the World.

Bioph. But do you mean that a Man may conſult which of theſe Oracles, and when he pleaſes, for a Reſolution in any matter of Difficulty that occurs in the Buſineſs of Religion.

Sebaſt. No indeed, *Biophilus*, that you muſt not expect, but muſt content your ſelf only with the laſt of the four, namely, the Holy Scripture, that is the ſtanding and *lively Oracle of God*, and *more ſure than a Voice from Heaven*, Heb. 5. 12. 2 Pet. 1. 18, 19.

Bioph. But may I not ask, why might not ſome of thoſe other Declarations of the divine Mind have been continued as well as that of the Scripture, eſpecially either a Voice from Heaven, or ſome immediate Impreſs of God almighty upon the Minds of Men, if it had been but for the Atteſtation

teſtation to, and fuller Confirmation of the Bible, and the written Way of divine Revelation?

Sebaſt. Nay, *Biophilus*, we muſt not ask God a Reaſon of that, but be thankful to him for what he hath afforded us, eſpecially ſince that is as much as is neceſſary for our Guidance; for thoſe that *hear not* Moſes *and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded tho' one roſe from the Dead*, Luke 16. 31. much leſs if they heard a Voice from Heaven.

The Reaſon of the Surceaſe of Voices from Heaven and ſpecial Oracles.

Nevertheleſs I muſt tell you, I do not think it altogether impoſſible to give a modeſt Man more particular Satisfaction in this Caſe, for there were apparently ſpecial Reaſons why God ſhould make ſuch ſpecial and prodigious Diſcoveries of himſelf in former times as he doth not make now-a-days, namely, becauſe for a good Part of the Age of the World there was no written Law, and ſo God muſt apply himſelf to Men in ſome extraordinary Way, or they would have had no Inſtruction in his Will at all. And then after that the Law was given by a Voice from Heaven on Mount *Sinai*, and written on Tables of Stone, it was in it ſelf ſo imperfect a Draught of the divine Mind, and for the moſt Part ſo accommodated to the Weakneſs of that People, and to the Infancy of the World, that it would have been hard to have kept a Man of any Sagacity in a conſtant Belief of it as coming from God, if he had not continually and from time to time made prodigious Atteſtations to it: But now eſpecially ſince our Saviour came into the World, and we have the Books of the New Teſtament as well as of the Old, there is ſo full a Declaration of the divine Mind, and that not in Types or Figures neither, but in ſo plain a Way, and with ſo much Agreeableneſs of the things diſcovered to the Reaſon

ſon of Mankind; that there is no need of any ſecondary Atteſtation, nor any thing more than that it appears that thoſe Writings were indited by God.

Beſides, it is to be conſidered that the Way of giving Anſwer by a Voice from Heaven, unleſs it had been granted to every Man (and then it muſt have been done almoſt every Day and Hour, and in every Part of the World alſo) could not have given better Satisfaction to the Generality of Men (I mean to ſuch as were not Ear-Witneſſes of ſuch a Voice) than this Way of Scripture doth: For without infinite and continual Miracles, it muſt have been their Lot and Duty to believe without hearing ſuch a Voice.

And for that other Way of ſecret Intimation of God's Mind to the Minds of Men by a private and particular Oracle, it is plain that it could go no farther than to ſatisfy that particular Perſon to whom ſuch Anſwer was given; and therefore was only fit to be made uſe of in extraordinary Caſes, and upon ſome extraordinary Perſons; and even then there was need of ſome Miracle to attend ſuch Intimations, in order to the ſecuring the Minds of ſuch Men from the Deluſions of the Devil, or their own Fancies: And when that was done, this Diſcovery could go no farther than the Perſon to whom it was particularly made; for it *was like the white Stone which no Man knew, but he that received it*, Rev. 2. 17. The reſt of Mankind could have no other Advantage by it, nor be better ſecured of the Oracle than we are of what we learn by the Holy Scripture, no nor ſo well neither, as you will ſee by and by, if you pleaſe.

Bioph. With all my Heart, for that is the very Point I deſire to be reſolved in; but in order thereto, firſt let me intreat you to explain what you mean by this Way of divine Legiſlation, or

this

this Way of delivering the Will of God, by the Writings of the Holy Scripture.

What is meant by God's inditing the Holy Scripture, and the Reasonableness of it.

Sebast. The Way is this: Divine Wisdom resolving to give a standing Law and Guide to Mankind, in the first Place, inspired certain holy Men, that is, made clear Impressions of his own Sentiments upon their Minds, and then also guided and governed them in the writing and publishing the aforesaid Impressions for the Use of others.

That it is easy for God almighty to imprint his own Sense upon the Minds of such Men as he shall chuse for that Purpose, you cannot doubt when you consider that Power of his which he display'd in the Creation, and that therefore the Minds of Men must needs be *in his Hands as Clay in the Hands of the Potter*, so that he can mould and figure them as he pleases.

That he can give Assurance to the Minds of such Men, that it is he himself that makes those Impressions upon them, and no other Agent, you have acknowledged already; and there can be no more Cause to doubt it, than you have whether it be I that speak to you or a Spirit out of the Wall: For certainly God hath Ways enough to distinguish himself and his Motions from Illusions.

The Holy Scripture is the Supply of the Defects of natural Reason.

That also he should be able to guide and govern those holy Pen-men in the writing of what he himself had put into their Minds, and in delivering his Sense so fully and clearly as to answer his End, and become a sufficient Rule for Men to govern themselves by, must be granted, or you make him more impotent than a Man.

Lastly, That he could by his Providence preserve the Books so written from being imbezell'd or

or corrupted, that ſo they may anſwer the Ends aforeſaid, cannot be denied without denying his Providence, and ſubverting the Foundation of Religion.

So that in ſumm, this Way of the Holy Scripture muſt needs be a very ſufficient Way of divine Legiſlation, and abundant Supply of the Defects of natural Reaſon in divine things.

Biopb. I grant all you have hitherto ſaid, which amounts to no more but this, that it is not impoſſible for God to do ſo; but now the Queſtion is, how ſhall it appear that *(de facto)* he hath done ſo? Or (which amounts to the ſame thing) how do you prove that thoſe Books (commonly called the Bible) are indeed what they pretend to be?

Sebaſt. There lies the pinch of the Buſineſs indeed, as you well obſerve; and therefore, in order to your full Satisfaction in that Point, let me deſire you to lay together the four following Particulars.

The Proof of the divine Authority of the Books of Holy Scripture.

Firſt, It cannot be denied but that the Books of Holy Scripture are (at leaſt generally ſpeaking) the moſt antient Monuments in the whole World. Wherefore, beſides the Veneration which we commonly allow to Antiquity, it is apparent that they have endured the Teſt of all times paſt, and that all the Wit of Man hath not been able hitherto to find any conſiderable Flaw in them, and conſequently their Authority and Credibility is ſo much greater than any other Books, by how much the time is longer ſince they were written and publiſhed; for there have not been wanting thoſe that have endeavoured to expoſe them, and if they had been able to have done it, doubtleſs long e'er this time theſe Books had loſt all their Veneration: But ſince they

they ſtill retain their Dignity and Eſteem (notwithſtanding all Efforts of their Enemies to the contrary) there is ground enough to believe they never ſhall be able to do it, and conſequently that there can be no reaſonable Suſpicion of the Truth of them.

To which may be added, that ſince divine Providence hath alſo ſo long preſerved and watched over theſe Writings, it is very natural to collect that therefore they are ſuch as he peculiarly owns and recommends to us.

Secondly, It is to be conſidered that the Doctrine of theſe Books is perfectly agreeable to the natural Notions we have of God, and therefore being fit for him to be the Author of, they muſt conſequently be fit for us to entertain, as coming from him, at leaſt upon reaſonable Evidence of Fact that they did ſo.

If indeed any Man could juſtly charge theſe Writings as containing any thing abſurd or impoſſible, or make appear that they countenanced ſuch things as are diſagreeable to what we naturally know of God, or can diſcern to be in him by the beſt Improvement of our Underſtanding: Then (as I have granted before) we could not be bound to believe them, although they ſhould be ſuppoſed to have all the Confirmation imaginable; for no Man can believe what he will, nor be obliged to act contrary to the natural Senſe and Principles of his Mind, upon any Authority whatſoever.

But whenſoever a Doctrine is propounded that is reaſonable in it ſelf, and beſides hath reaſonable Evidence that it came from God, and is part of his revealed Will, then it is highly reaſonable that we ſhould receive it as ſuch, notwithſtauding ſome trifling Objections which may be to the contrary.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, It is eſpecially to be minded that the Doctrine of the Holy Scripture hath not wanted ſuch ſpecial Aſſurances that it came from God, as were fit for him to give, or for Men to expect. For all thoſe holy Men that delivered any Part of it to the World, were abetted by Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of what they ſo delivered: So that either God almighty muſt be ſuppoſed to ſet the Seal of his Omnipotency to a Falſhood, or elſe theſe Doctrines are the Diſcoveries of the Mind of God.

Now that there was ſuch miraculous Proof, we may be aſſured in the general by this Conſideration, that it is not imaginable that ſuch Doctrine and ſuch Books ſhould have obtained that Credit in the times when they were ſet on foot, without ſuch Confirmation, eſpecially ſince the Matter of thoſe Writings in a great Part was ſo very different from the Notions, and Practices, and Intereſts of thoſe Ages and Perſons to whom they were publiſhed. " Inſomuch that (as a great Man ſaid of old) " to ſuppoſe the World to be brought to " the Reception of theſe Doctrines without a " Miracle, might juſtly ſeem the greateſt Miracle " that ever was.

And in particular, that the Books of the Old Teſtament had ſuch divine Atteſtation, the very Books themſelves frequently appeal to, or at leaſt give us the Hiſtory of ſuch things of this kind as could neither be withſtood and denied by the Men of the preſent Age when they were done, nor confuted by thoſe that came after; beſides the famous Spirit of Prophecy, which diſplayed it ſelf all along thoſe times, (of which more by and by.)

And then for the New Teſtament, beſides all the Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, that one of his Reſurrection was a thing both ſo notorious to be obſerved, and ſo eaſy to have been confuted

confuted if it had been falſe, that there is no Colour of Reaſon to doubt of it, and conſequently none to doubt of his Doctrine: And then in the Apoſtles times, that miraculous Ability of ſpeaking with all kind of Tongues, which was ſuddenly beſtowed upon the Chriſtians on the famous Day of *Pentecoſt*, *Acts* 2. 1. was a thing equally ſtupendious in it ſelf, and irrefragable in its Evidence of the chriſtian Religion.

Now I have ſhewed you before, that whatſoever Point hath been once ſufficiently proved, it muſt be true for ever, and there can be no Reaſon to expect After-Miracles, for Confirmation of it.

Laſtly, It is obſervable that the ſeveral Parts of Holy Scripture, I mean the Books of the Old and New Teſtament, (as they are uſually diſtinguiſhed) do, like a Pair of Indentures, juſtify one another, and aſſure us that there can be no Fraud or Forgery in either of them; for beſides that, they bearing Witneſs to one another, one of them cannot be falſe, unleſs the other be ſo too; and if either of them be proved by ~~Articles~~ Miracles, the other would be fully aſſured by the ſame means, although it had no Miracles peculiar to it ſelf.

Beſides this, I ſay, it is in the firſt Place certain, that theſe ſeveral Books, or Parts of Holy Scripture were written and publiſhed in ſeveral Ages of the World which were very remote from each other, and conſequently by ſuch Men as could poſſibly hold no Correſpondence or Confederacy with each other.

And then again, ſecondly, It is as plain alſo that (for Inſtance) the Old Teſtament foretels, many Ages before, what things ſhould come to paſs many Ages after; wherefore if thoſe things came to paſs accordingly, there can be no doubt, but God inſpired thoſe Men that propheſied thoſe things:

And

And if the New Teſtament, on the other Side, contain a Relation of ſuch Events as fully anſwer to thoſe Predictions then are both of them moſt certainly true.

And now laying theſe four things together, and only ſetting aſide the Demand of preſent and daily Miracles, which I have ſhewed to be unreaſonable to expect, I pray tell me, *Biophilus*, what farther Evidence can any ingenious Man require in ſuch a Caſe as this is?

Bioph. To ſpeak the Truth from my Heart I cannot tell.

Sebaſt. Why then I hope, *Biophilus*, you think your ſelf now concerned in thoſe ſacred Records, and for the time to come will make them a principal Part of your Study, eſpecially the New Teſtament.

Bioph. I plainly ſee I ought to do ſo; but why do you lay the Emphaſis eſpecially on the New Teſtament?

Sebaſt. For no leſs Reaſon than becauſe that Part of Holy Scripture, contains the cleareſt, fulleſt Diſcovery of the Mind of God, as being the ultimate and moſt perfect Declaration of himſelf, made by the very Son of God in humane Nature.

Bioph. I am hitherto an utter Stranger to the Contents of thoſe Books; (to my Shame be it ſpoken;) I pray therefore, give me in ſhort the Sum of them.

Sebaſt. Nay, for that you muſt excuſe me, and let me by all means adviſe you to ſtudy the Books themſelves, they are eaſy to be had, and I can aſſure you, you will receive greater Satisfaction and profit more by that Courſe, than by any Epitome I can make of them. *The Sum of the New Teſtament.*

Bioph. Nay, good *Sebaſtian*, it is not my Intention to decline the reading of the New Teſtament,

but you perceive I have loſt too much time already; therefore let me again requeſt you to give me (at leaſt) a compendious View of the principal things contained in theſe Writings.

Sebaſt. Since you will have it ſo, I comply with your Deſires, and as far as I can comprehend ſo great and weighty a Subject, and ſo full a Writing in my Mind, I muſt tell you the New Teſtament principally conſiſts of theſe three things.

Firſt, An exact and excellent Rule of Holy Living, by conforming our ſelves to which, we ſhall moſt certainly pleaſe God, and moſt effectually procure his Favour.

Secondly, The moſt powerful and effectual Motives to provoke us to an uniform and thorough Compliance with the aforeſaid Rule.

Thirdly, The moſt proper means and Aſſiſtances to that End, that ſo we may not only be encourag'd to undertake, but enabled to accompliſh that holy Courſe which is propounded and preſcribed.

This (I take it) is a Summary of the whole Goſpel, at leaſt (as I ſaid) the principal Contents of it.

For by the firſt of theſe Particulars we have a Law given us to guide our Conſciences, and a generous Model or Deſign of raiſing and improving the State of Mankind.

By the ſecond our Affections are inflamed, and our Endeavours encouraged proportionably to the Deſign aforeſaid, and by the laſt Particular our Infirmities are relieved, and we are aſſured of attaining that glorious Deſign if we be not wanting to our ſelves.

Bioph. I wonder in my Heart what made you ſo unwilling to gratify this Requeſt of mine. By this little Glimpſe which you have now afforded me, I ſee plainly that thoſe Books contain a very admirable Inſtitution, unleſs it be that you have ſome

ſtrange Art in repreſenting things, and raiſing one's Opinion.

Sebaſt. No, aſſure your ſelf, *Biophilus*, there is no Art in the Caſe, but the mere Excellency of Chriſtianity appearing in its genuine Colours, as you will be more throughly convinced when you have ſtudied it well, and eſpecially have made Experiment of it in Practice.

Biph. As cold and diffident as my Temper hath been hitherto, I am now on the ſudden inflamed, and I am enamour'd on this Idea of Religion you ſpeak of: Pray therefore explain theſe things more fully to me; and firſt I deſire to know more particularly what the peculiar Laws and Rules of this Inſtitution are.

The peculiar Laws of the chriſtian Religion.

Sebaſt. For that, *Biophilus*, you muſt know, that this Inſtitution of the Goſpel being (as I ſaid) the laſt and ultimate Revelation of the divine Will, muſt conſequently be more exact and perfect than any other; yet notwithſtanding it is not deſtructive, but only perfective of thoſe that went before it: And therefore, as it contradicts no former Prophecy or Revelation of God's Will; ſo it repeals no Law of Nature or Reaſon, derogates from no Rule of Piety, Gratitude, Civility, or Humanity, but only adds to them and improves them; for ſo our Saviour himſelf hath told us, *He came not to deſtroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them*, Mat. 5. 17. So that indeed the chriſtian Inſtitution is a Pandect or Digeſt of all that is *grave, decent, prudent, virtuous*, or *praiſe-worthy*, Phil. 4. 8. all which things it not only re-inforces by more powerful Arguments (as I will ſhew you by and by) but requires every of them in greater Perfection. But now the Supplement or Addition it makes to all thoſe, is that which is to be called the peculiar

liar Character of this Religion, and that, I think, may be reduced to these three Heads.

First, It enjoins a more excellent and spiritual Worship of God.

Secondly, A more refined Purity of Heart and Life.

Thirdly, A more noble, generous and diffusive Charity.

1. The Gospel prescribes a more spiritual Worship than was in Use in the World before; for our Saviour expressly affirms, *The time now comes when the true Worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and Truth*, and gives the Reason, *because God is a Spirit*, &c. *John* 4. 23, 24. It is true God ever was a Spirit, and it is impossible he should ever have been otherwise (as I have shewn you before;) but his spiritual Nature was not so well understood heretofore, whilst he was wont to represent himself by Fire, or in humane Shape amongst Men: And whilst he required to have a Temple built for his Residence, as if he required an external State of Grandeur or bodily Accommodation; and lastly, whilst he required Sacrifices and Oblations to be made to him of such things as are of value amongst Men, as if he was a necessitous Deity, and used to eat and drink as his Worshippers do. But now, since he hath given Proof of his mighty Majesty without those visible Appearances, and the Sons of Men are better instructed that he is a pure Spirit without all Mixture of Matter, and infinitely full, perfect, and happy in himself, without any Accession of other things to him: Henceforth he will not be worshipped with the Steams of Blood and Fat, nor pleased with Clouds of Incense, but with hearty Adorations, with raised Affections,

More spiritual Worship peculiarly required by the Gospel.

fections, with the Contemplations of pure Minds, with inward Reverence and Admiration of him, with devout Prayers and Praises offer'd to him; with Love, with Truſt and Confidence in him, and Endeavours of conforming our ſelves to him: This is the Worſhip that is ſuitable to a good and happy, and a ſpiritual Being; yet not excluding bodily Expreſſions of Reverence neither, but as principally requiring the former, and making this latter only the Acceſſary and Effect of that.

Purity of Heart is another great and peculiar Law of Chriſtianity.

2. The Goſpel requires a more refined Temper of Heart and Life than was uſually practiſed or eaſy to be arrived at before; namely, it preſcribes to our inward Man as well as our outward Actions, and that our Hearts be pure as well as our bodily Members; that our Reaſon have the Maſtery of our Luſts and Paſſions, ſo that we neither indulge our Senſuality in the intemperate Uſe of Pleaſure, nor live as if we were born to eat and drink, but be in ſome Meaſure above the Guſto and Reliſh of bodily Entertainments; that we ſubdue our Paſſions and Inclinations to Anger and Revenge, and ſoar above the Tempeſt of this World, ſo as to deſpiſe the uſual Cares, and Fears, and Solicitudes of the preſent Life, and enjoy our ſelves in a kind of divine Tranquillity and Security.

The Generality of Mankind, both *Jews* and *Pagans*, thought it a mighty Felicity to hoard up Riches, to graſp civil Power, a raviſhing thing to ſwim in ſenſual Pleaſures; and nothing was counted either more ſweet or more brave than to revenge a Man's ſelf when he thought he was affronted: But as the Glory of all theſe things is faded by the Light of the Goſpel, ſo the Deſires of them are to be mortified by the Laws of Chriſtianity, the Mind is to be freed of theſe ſordid Entertainments, and

to be taken up with more pure and spiritual Delights, with intellectual Pleasures, with the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, with the Glory of Conquest (not over other Men, but) over our selves, our brutal Lusts, with the Joys of God's Favour and the Peace of our own Conscience.

Universal Charity another peculiar Law of the christian Religion.

3. And lastly, this Religion requires a larger Spirit, and a more noble and diffusive Charity than agrees with the common Standard of the World, or than was prescribed by any other Religion. The Charity of a *Pagan* commonly extended no farther than his Family and Friends, or at most to his own City and Countrey; and that of the *Jews* to their own Nation and Religion only: But to love their Enemies was by both of them look'd upon as so far from necessary, that it was thought impossible and absurd. Whereas this Institution requires us to love our very Enemies, and those that mortally hate us; to render Good for Evil; to embrace all the World in our Affections; to look upon all Mankind as our Brethren, the Children of one common Parent; that there be no Men so silly, or peevish, so mean and contemptible, or so remote from us in Blood, Countrey, Manners, or Opinion, but we be ready to do all good Offices towards them; to oblige them by Kindness; and to conquer and overpower them by real Instances of Good-Will and endearing Carriage. This (as I take it) is the Sum of the christian Law, and the peculiar Character of that Religion, at least, so far as concerns the Rule of living.

Biopth. You have thus far, I confess, described a very brave Institution; but sure all this is only Matter of Speculation, or at most a Draught of some monastick Order. It is possible perhaps in their retired Way of living (where they are free

from the Temptations and Provocations that are incident to other Men) ſomething at this rate may be pretended to, or at leaſt dreamed of, but ſure theſe Laws are too ſtrict to be practicable, or indeed poſſible to the Generality of Mankind; and then, according to your own Rule, they cannot come from God, who muſt be ſuppoſed ſo wiſe as to know what Men are capable of performing, and to be too juſt to require Impoſſibilities.

Sebaſt. You will better judge of that matter by and by, when you have conſidered the Motives and Aſſiſtances this Religion affords, as well as the Rules it preſcribes: For you know that things of this nature are difficult or eaſy in Proportion to the Encouragements to undertake and conflict with them. Great Rewards raiſe great Spirits, and you can never tell what any Man will come to, till you underſtand what Inducements and Motives he ſhall be acted by: Now by that time you have heard what remains to be ſaid concerning the chriſtian Religion, I do not doubt but you will pronounce it to be every whit as feaſible in Practice as noble in Speculation.

The peculiar Motives or Encouragements of the Goſpel.

Bioph. You ſay right; for God's ſake therefore go on, and in the next Place repreſent to me the Inducements the Goſpel affords a Man to live at ſuch a rate as you have ſpoken of.

Sebaſt. Why then the ſecond thing remarkable in the Goſpel is, the powerful Motives it makes uſe of to provoke Men to an uniform Compliance with its Laws, and they are eſpecially theſe three.

Firſt, It charms Men by a lively Draught of the divine Goodneſs.

Secondly, It provokes them by the Example of our Saviour.

Thirdly, It inflames them by the Promiſe of eternal Life.

The firſt Motive is the divine Goodneſs lively and powerfully ſet forth in the Goſpel.

1. The Goſpel makes ſo lively a Repreſentation of the divine Goodneſs and Clemency, eſpecially in the free Pardon, and total Abolition of all Sin paſt (upon Condition of a generous Piety and Virtue for the time to come) that it powerfully works upon Men's Ingenuity, and melts them into a Compliance with the moſt difficult Terms that ſuch Goodneſs can be capable of propounding to them and requiring of them. Do but think with your ſelf, if you had ſo far offended your Prince, and violated the Laws of your Countrey; that Majeſty was exaſperated, and Juſtice armed with Severity againſt you, ſo that you was under a terrible Sentence, and expected a ſpeedy Execution; now in this Caſe if notwithſtanding your Prince ſhould condeſcend to make you an offer of Pardon and full Reſtitution to your former Capacity upon certain Terms; would you not (I ſay) be willing to enter upon a very difficult Service, and undertake the moſt hazardous Enterprize? Would you then be nice and captious, or ſtand carping and capitulating? Nay would you not be inflamed with Reſolution, ſpirited by Gratitude, and find your ſelf to become more than your ſelf, in ſuch an Undertaking?

Now this is the Caſe, *Biophilus*: We have infinitely offended almighty God in the whole Courſe of our Lives, and ſo are juſtly fallen under his Diſpleaſure, inſomuch that a Sentence of eternal Death is paſs'd againſt us: Notwithſtanding, in the Goſpel an Overture of Reconciliation is made, and upon thoſe Terms I mentioned even now, he offers to receive us into Favour, that all our Sins, how many and great ſoever, ſhall be blotted out, and never

never come in Remembrance again; the Sentence ſhall be revoked; we ſhall never be upbraided with our Follies; no Cloud ſhall hang over us; no ill Character be upon us; but our Conſciences ſhall be quiet, and God almighty will everlaſtingly ſhine upon us. Now can any Man in this Caſe expoſtulate the Terms with God almighty? Can he find in his Heart to complain of the Trouble of his Service, the Difficulty of Self-denial, or think it hard to be obliged to forgive other Men upon Condition of God's forgiving him? No ſurely; he will heartily embrace the Propoſitions, he will love and thank God with all his Soul, and rejoyce in Difficulty it ſelf, that he may give Proof of his Gratitude, and be only ſorry that he can give no better Evidence of it. In a Word, he will be inflamed in his Reſolutions, and winged in his Endeavours of ſerving and pleaſing ſuch a God: *A God of Mercy, rich in Mercy and Goodneſs, pardoning Iniquity, Tranſgreſſion and Sin*; forgiving old, and great, and the moſt diſingenuous Sinners.

Bioph. Oh! *Sebaſtian*, you break my Heart; Enough, enough, I cannot forbear——

The Example of our Saviour another Goſpel-motive.

Sebaſt. The ſecond Motive of the Goſpel is the Example of our Saviour himſelf: This it ſets before us, and by this it provokes us to a Compliance with the Laws aforeſaid. That he was the very Son of God, *the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Character of his Majeſty*, Heb. 1. 2. I have intimated before; and all the miraculous Glories of his Birth, Life, Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion to Heaven, have abundantly demonſtrated it. Now that he ſhould come down from Heaven to Earth, and there frame himſelf to an exact Conformity to the aforeſaid Laws of the Goſpel, is not a greater Inſtance of his admirable Self-humiliation, than of the incomparable Excellency,

lency, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of thoſe Laws, in that they are ſuch as God himſelf thought fit to be ſubject to them himſelf, as well as to recommend them to us.

For now certainly no Man can be ſo prodigiouſly abſurd, as to account it a mean Drudgery to be converſant in that way of worſhipping God which the Goſpel teaches, ſeeing *Chriſt Jeſus* himſelf made it not only his Buſineſs, but his Delight.

No Man ſurely can think himſelf hardly uſed, if he be a little reſtrained in the uſe of bodily Pleaſures, ſince the Son of God, when he was in humane Fleſh, diſdained them.

No Man can be ſo fond as to admire Riches and Honours, and the Preferments of this World, which our Saviour could have had in the greateſt meaſure that is imaginable, if he had not deſpiſed them: No Man can be ſo madly paſſionate, as to think that to revenge himſelf is a great point of Glory, and that it is unmanly to omit it, when he obſerves the Son of God, who could have done it effectually, inſtead thereof, only praying for his Enemies: Nor can any Man be ſo mean-ſpirited as either to be vainly puffed up with Proſperity, or ſink under Adverſity, Reproach, or the deepeſt Contempt imaginable, that ſees the Son of God to be the pooreſt, meaneſt, and moſt ignominiouſly treated of all Men.

Beſides, it is farther conſider'd that there is no Colour for any Man to pretend an Impoſſibility of the thing, or Impotency in himſelf to perform any of the forementioned, or any other Duty of Chriſtianity, ſince our Saviour performed them all in humane Nature; wherein he was ſubject to the ſame Infirmities, aſſaulted with the ſame Temptations, and preſſed with the ſame Neceſſities that we are. He had the ſame Fleſh and Blood, felt the ſame Pains, was hungry, thirſty and weary, as we

are,

are, and ſo there is no Excuſe to be made in our Caſe, that would not have been as reaſonable in his.

Now all this conſidered (together with the mighty Power of Example in general, as that it takes away the Pretence of Ignorance, baffles the Plea of Impotency, ſhames Cowardice, and kindles Emulation) cannot but have the force of a mighty Motive, and prevail upon all ingenuous Perſons *to caſt away every Weight and the Sin that beſets them, and to run with Patience* and Courage *the Race ſet before them*, Heb. 12. 1.

The Promiſe of eternal Life the principal Motive of the Goſpel.

3. But the third and moſt powerful Motive of the Goſpel is yet behind, and that is the Promiſe of eternal Life to all thoſe that frame themſelves by the Rules aforeſaid. And that whereas the beſt that other Men can hope for, is, to rot in their Graves, and everlaſtingly to be forgotten; (but that will not ſerve their turn, for they ſhall certainly ſuffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire;) thoſe, on the contrary, that live by the Laws of the Goſpel, ſhall be raiſed again out of the Duſt, and outlive the very Heavens in unſpeakable and endleſs Felicity.

That this is not a Dream, but a real Truth, you may be thus aſſured. Firſt, for the Poſſibility of it, becauſe I have ſhewed you already that God is a neceſſary Being, and muſt live for ever; and therefore he that had it in his Power to make things out of nothing, cannot want Ability to preſerve ſuch things in being as it pleaſeth him. And then, Secondly, that he will do ſo, is the great Promiſe of the Goſpel, which he delivered by his own Son, and *whereof he hath given Aſſurance in that he raiſed him from the dead*, Acts 17. 31.

Now, *Biophilus*, this is ſuch a thing, this living

for

for ever is ſuch a Motive, that it is able to make a Man to defy all Difficulty ſo far as even to be inflamed the more by the Apprehenſion of it, and to ſtick at nothing but flat Impoſſibility. But never any Man yet had the Folly to object that in the Caſe: It may be ſaid to be difficult to maintain a conſtant Attendance upon God's Worſhip, a little uneaſy to deny our preſent Delight and Pleaſure, ſomething againſt the Grain to ſtifle our Paſſions, and to lay aſide Revenge; but never any Body ſaid or thought any of them to be abſolutely impoſſible.

For it is plain in Experience, that many Men have undergone greater Hardſhips, than any are required in the Goſpel, either to demonſtrate their Love, or to purſue their Paſſion; in Compliance with their Fears, or for the ſake of their Intereſts; ſometimes out of Flattery, and ſometimes out of mere Reverence of ſome Perſon; but at any time for Self-ſecurity and Preſervation. Now whatſoever may be done upon thoſe inconſiderable Grounds, moſt certainly cannot be impoſſible to be done when eternal Life is at ſtake: And this being, as I have ſaid, plainly propounded in the Goſpel as the great Wager to him that runs that Race, and withal being impoſſible to be obtained upon any other Terms, muſt needs make *the Yoke of Chriſt* ſeem (at leaſt comparatively) *eaſy, and his Burthen light*, Matth. 11. 30. And ſo much for the ſecond principal Point of Chriſtianity.

Bioph. Now, *Sebaſtian*, you have increaſed my Wonder more than ever, though I muſt confeſs you have tranſlated it to another Subject; foraſmuch as whereas I ſuſpected before the Poſſibility of complying with thoſe ſtrict Laws of the Goſpel, now I am as much amazed that any Body ſhould complain of Difficulty in them, thoſe things conſider'd which you have laſt repreſented.

Sebaſt.

Sebaſt. God be thanked for that Change, *Biophilus*, but your Wonder of the ſecond ſort will be yet heighten'd, when you conſider alſo the Aſſiſtances that the Goſpel affords us towards the Performance of what it requires, which is the third and laſt of thoſe things whereby I deſigned to repreſent the Sum of it to you; and (to be ſhort) that conſiſts principally in theſe two things.

1. The inward Aſſiſtance and and Co-operation of God's Holy Spirit.

2. The outward Advantages of the Society of his Church.

The Aſſiſtances and Helps which the Goſpel affords towards the performing of its Laws. Firſt, the Co-operation of the Holy Spirit.

1. He that by his Son hath required ſuch things of us as the aforeſaid, namely ſpiritual Worſhip, Purity of Heart, and univerſal Charity, hath alſo promiſed by his divine Power to co-operate with us in the Diſcharge of them; and then there can be no ſuch thing as Impoſſibility, nor ſcarcely ſo much as Difficulty in the Caſe: For what is impoſſible to almighty Power? Or what Burthen can there be to complain of, when we have ſuch an Helper?

But the meaning of this is not, that God will do all for us without us, ſo as that we ſhall be only paſſive, and Recipients of his Impreſſions, as ſome have very abſurdly fanſied: For then all the Acts of Piety and Virtue would be more properly God's Acts than ours, and could be capable of no Praiſe or Reward as proceeding from us: And beſides, this could not be called divine Aſſiſtance, but his Creation rather, ſince in ſuch an Exertion of his own Omnipotency, he did wholly over-bear or ſuperſede our Endeavours.

But the meaning is this, that whenſoever any Man (in Contemplation of the Motives and Encouragements aforeſaid) ſets himſelf in earneſt to comply

comply with that which God by the Laws of the Goſpel hath made to be his Duty, from thenceforth he ſhall not only have the Benefit of a common Providence in upholding and ſtrengthening the Powers of his Mind, nor only find the Effects of a more eſpecial Providence in removing Obſtacles, and making his Way eaſy to him; but by the vital Power and Efficacy of the divine Spirit his Mind ſhall be more enlighten'd to ſee the Excellency of the thing he goes about; his Will ſhall be confirmed and ſtrengthened in its Choice and Reſolution; his Affections quicken'd in the Purſuit and Execution of that Choice: And above all, his Heart ſhall be cheared in the whole Enterprize with unſpeakable Joy, and many times with an admirable and raviſhing Proſpect of the Glory that ſhall attend and crown his Performance.

This our Saviour promiſed to the chriſtian Church before he left the World and aſcended to Heaven, *viz.* That he would this Way be *preſent with them to the End of the World*, Mat. 28. 20. And hereof he gave a great Earneſt, when on the famous Day of *Pentecoſt* (Acts 2. 1.) the Holy Spirit came in a very prodigious manner upon all the Apoſtles and Chriſtians that were aſſembled together as the Repreſentative and Seminary of his future Church; and it was done (amongſt other Reaſons) to give Aſſurance that he was mindful of his Promiſe, and that all Ages after might juſtly expect the Preſence of his Spirit with them (though not ſo viſible as in that extraordinary Inſtance) which accordingly good Men at all times find true by comfortable Experience.

Bioph. This which you now tell me is the ſtrangeſt thing that ever I heard of in my Life. If this be true, it will be ridiculous to object Difficulty againſt the chriſtian Inſtitution; for upon this Suppoſition it is plain there can be nothing but Sottiſhneſs or Obſtinacy, Cowardice and Credulity

dulity, to hinder a Man in obſerving the Laws of it. But I pray however, proceed in your Method, and ſhew me alſo, in the next Place, what are thoſe external Helps and Advantages which you intimated?

The ſecond or external Aſſiſtance of the Goſpel, is the Advantage of the Society of a Church.

Sebaſt. The external Advantage of this Religion which I eſpecially intended, is the Inſtitution of a chriſtian Church; that is, the Son of God the Author of this Religion ordered that all thoſe who embraced it, and became his Diſciples, ſhould not content themſelves to live ſingly and ſeparately, as if they were unconcerned one in another; but unite themſelves into a Body of ſpiritual Polity; and that although they were to be reſpectively ſubject to the civil Governments under which they lived (at leaſt ſo far as the Laws of Men intrenched not upon thoſe of his Religion) yet they were to be under a ſtricter Tie of Unity amongſt themſelves, and to become a diſtinct Corporation under peculiar Officers, as well as for peculiar Ends and Purpoſes. Nor was this a mere arbitrary or poſitive Law of his, and to be obſerved only becauſe he has commanded it; but as it was enjoined with admirable Wiſdom on his Part, ſo it was no leſs of ſingular Advantage to all his Diſciples in innumerable Reſpects, ſome of which I am engaged to repreſent to you in particular.

The great Advantages of Church-Society.

And firſt the Conſtitution of this Society of a Church, was an excellent Expedient for the preſerving and holding up of the Doctrine of Chriſtianity in the World, and for the Prevention both of Corruptions and Errors in the Laws, and of Miſtakes in the great Motives and Encouragements of this Religion. Hence the Church is called by the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, *The Pillar and*

Ground

Ground of Truth, 1 Tim. 3. 15. Not that the Church properly gives Authority to the Doctrine of our Religion, for that it hath immediately from our Saviour himself, and from the Miracles wrought by God to attest it (as I shewed before;) but because the Church was the Conservatory of the Books wherein the Doctrine was written, and a Witness of the aforesaid Proofs made of the Divinity of it, and competent to secure us from Imposture, and to preserve and hold forth those sacred Books that contained it as the Summ and Code of our Religion. Accordingly it is observeable, that in the Rage of *Pagan* Persecution in the time of *Diocletian*, and when the Enemies of this Religion grew to that Height of Pride and Confidence, as to promise to themselves to root out all Memory and Remains of Christianity, the Care and Zeal of this Society preserved this sacred *depositum* of holy Scripture, entire to after-Ages, when otherwise private Persons would or might out of Fear and Weakness have delivered them up to be destroyed.

Again, Secondly, This Way of incorporating Christians in the Society of a Church, was a more easy and ready Way for the Instruction of the several Persons of which that Society consisted and necessary for the publishing, explaining, and inculcating the Doctrine and Laws of their Religion to them. For if our Saviour had appointed Pastors and not a Flock (unless he had made the former as numerous almost as the latter) it had been impossible that they should have instructed all his Disciples: But now he having appointed and obliged them to join together in a Body, the same Pastor and the same Labour that instructs one may instruct many. It is in this Case as it is with those Creatures that need the Assistance, and are fed by the Hand of Man, God hath ordered them by Nature

ture to join in Flocks and Herds, that they might be the more capable of humane Culture, and answer the labour and care Men beſtow upon them; whereas wild Beaſts, they live ſingly, and therefore are left to ſhift for themſelves. Now this is a great advantage to all the Diſciples of this Religion, that thoſe that cannot read and ſtudy, nor are capable of feeding themſelves, by this Society of a Church, God hath provided a way for their conſtant and eaſie Inſtruction by the publick Miniſtry of the Goſpel.

Moreover, Thirdly, By means of ſuch a Society and Officers appointed over it, there is proviſion made for the Reſolution of all Doubts, and for the eaſe and ſatisfaction of melancholy and perplexed Conſciences, which is a ſingular advantage of this Inſtitution of a Church. For it is not to be ſuppoſed but that there will be a great number of well-meaning Men who may either want parts and ability to judge of ſeveral things that may concern them, or may want leiſure to conſider ſo maturely as a difficulty may require, or may not be impartial enough in their own caſe to guide their own Conſciences; now for the relief of ſuch as theſe, it is of great uſe to be in the Society of a Church where God hath appointed ſuch to be Officers in it *who have the Spirit of the Lord upon them to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted and to comfort thoſe that mourn*, Iſai. 61. 1, 2. Such as have made it their buſineſs to ſtudy the more difficult points of Religion, that they may be able *to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that fainteth*, Iſa. 50. 4. And whoſe Duty and Province it is not ſo much to make publick harangues to the Flock, as by particular application to remove Scruples, to ſolve Difficulties, and provide for Emergencies; and all this they may well be ſuppoſed to be able to do with great ſincerity and impartiality, as alſo

with great Authority, as being hereunto appointed by God himſelf, as aſſiſted herein by the Holy Spirit.

Fourthly, There is this further advantage of this Inſtitution of a Church, that the Members of this Society, are not only more likely to animate and inflame one another in the ways of Virtue and Piety by mutual Example; but alſo being concerned in one another, as of the ſame Body, and for the Honour of their common Faith and Religion, are authorized to watch over one another, to correct the erroneous, to admoniſh the careleſs, to reprove the vicious, to ſtrengthen the weak, to encourage the good, and, in a word, are obliged in an extraordinary manner to all Offices of Charity and Pity towards one another.

All which together muſt needs be a mighty means of ſecuring both the Doctrine and Practice of Religion, and of promoting all the ends of it.

When a Man hath not only the comfort of his private Conſcience whenſoever he doth bravely, but the publick Acclamations of the whole Church; and contrariwiſe, when he doth any thing baſely and viciouſly, he is not only under the ſecret laſhes of his own guilty Mind, but expoſed to ſhame and reproach, and incurs the Cenſure of the whole Society. When a Man cannot be fantaſtical and affect Novelty, but ſuch an honourable Body is concerned for his danger, and obliged to uſe their Endeavours to reclaim him, and if that be inſucceſsful, are put to make a publick Lamentation for him: nor, on the other ſide, can any Man acquit himſelf as a worthy Champion for the Truth, and miſs of a Laurel in this World, ſince he ſhall be ſure to have the gratulations and honourable eſteem of ſuch a Society. Now if there were no ſuch thing as a Church conſtituted, there would be very few Men found that would take care of

thoſe

thoſe things, and eſpecially few that would venture upon the ingrateful Office of reproving: or if perhaps ſome Perſons might be found who had zeal enough to undertake it, yet as in that caſe it would not eaſily appear to be their duty, ſo neither could it be performed with that Authority and Succeſs as now it may.

But then for the more ordinary Offices of Charity, ſuch as pitying and comforting the Weak, ſuccouring the Oppreſſed, and relieving the Neceſſitous; theſe would not only be coldly performed, but indeed would be thought to be no duties at all, if there was no ſuch thing as a Church whereby Men are incorporated together. For beſides that we find very little of this thought of or practiſed amongſt thoſe that are not of this Society, we may alſo generally take an Eſtimate of Mens Affection to the Church of Chriſt, by their Charity to the Members of it; but if Men believe there is ſuch a Society as a Church inſtituted, and they conſider themſelves as Members of it, then even Self-love (which makes others uncharitable) renders theſe highly charitable, becauſe they then look upon others as Members of the ſame Body with themſelves.

Fifthly and Laſtly, The Eſtabliſhment of the Society of a Church, and thereby a Publick Worſhip, is an Expedient of unſpeakable comfort and encouragement to all humble and modeſt perſons, and eſpecially to ſuch as are truly contrite and broken-hearted, in the addreſſing their Prayers to Almighty God, animating them againſt their ſenſe of the guilt of their Sins, the unworthineſs of their Perſons, the imperfection of their Prayers, and affording them many Arguments of hope for ſucceſs beyond what they could expect from their private Devotions.

Whilſt they conſider, in the firſt place, that they are now in God's Houſe, or *Court of Requeſts*, where he uſes to give audience to poor Suppliants.

Again, Secondly, That their Deſires are put up by the hands of God's own Miniſter, whom he hath appointed to preſent Petitions to himſelf.

Thirdly, That their Prayers are not offered up ſingly and alone, but in conjunction with the Devotions of ſo many other more holy Perſons as the whole Church conſiſts of; ſo that they may hope to ſpeed the better for ſuch Company, and eſpecially by the united Efficacy of ſo many ardent Affections.

And, Laſtly, The Faith and Hope of ſuch Men is wonderfully ſtrengthened by the Contemplation of the great Propitiation for Sin, made by our Saviour, and repreſented to their Eyes on the Lord's Table in the Holy Communion. All theſe things were mightily eſteemed by the Chriſtians of old, and certainly are great Advantages.

And thus I have now laid before you the peculiar Laws of the Goſpel, and ſhewed you alſo the admirable Encouragements, and the ſingular Helps and Aſſiſtances God hath afforded us towards the obſervance of thoſe Laws, and the Proſecution of that Religion. Is there any thing more I can ſerve you in?

Bioph. Yes, I plainly ſee there is a great deal more I may learn of you: But God be thanked, and I heartily thank you for what I have learned hitherto.

Sebaſt. You remember I have opened to you the grounds and reaſon of Religion in general, and thence led you to the Chriſtian Religion in particular; and by the line of that I have now brought you to the Church, and there I leave you in good hands, and I pray God be with you.

Bioph. You have brought me to ſee the folly of my

my own Prejudices, which I again thank God and you for: I am convinced of the reality and neceſſity of ſome Religion or other, and of the Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion above all that ever I heard of, or what I could have imagined; and now I intend in earneſt to bethink my ſelf how to live accordingly.

Sebaſt. Remember withal, to keep cloſe to the Church, and be conſtant and diligent in attendance upon the publick Worſhip of God there; that will be a means both to keep up that good zeal which you are now under, and to preſerve it from running out into wild extravagancies.

Bioph. I will, *Sebaſtian*, by God's Grace I will; and in that courſe hope to come to Heaven at laſt.

Phil. What, *Biophilus*, will you turn Knight Errant now?

Bioph. You neither can nor will, I know, *Philander*, ſo much upbraid me with my former Folly, as my own Heart will do it for me; but I will endeavour to make amends for that by my future diligence.

Phil. Ah! God forbid, *Biophilus*, that I, who am ſenſible of my own many Sins, ſhould upbraid your Errors. I embrace you with all my heart, I heartily welcome you into the way of Heaven; there I am ſure the Angels rejoice at this bleſſed Change, and nothing leſs than Devils can repine at it; and they muſt be a ſort of deſperate Wretches amongſt Men that can upbraid you for what is paſt.

Sebaſt. Well, good night to you both, Gentlemen, I doubt it grows late.

Phil. I hope, good *Sebaſtian*, you are not weary of well-doing; I was unwilling to interrupt you and *Biophilus* in your Diſcourſe hitherto, both becauſe it exceedingly confirmed and improved me in what (I thank God) I did believe already, and

eſpecially becauſe I did not doubt of a good iſſue of it upon my neighbour; but I have all this while waited for an opportunity to ask your Advice in a Caſe or two of very great Concernment; and now I intreat you allow me the liberty to do it.

Sebaſt. I pray God my Power be anſwerable to my Will to ſerve you: What is the matter, *Philander?*

Phil. There are theſe two things I would crave your Direction in:

Firſt, By what means a Man may maintain his ground, and keep ſtable and ſtedfaſt in Religion in diſtracted times?

And, ſecondly, What courſe he ſhould take to maintain an even temper and conſtant chearfulneſs of Spirit under all the Accidents of the preſent Life?

Sebaſt. Oh! *Philander*, there you have tied me by the Leg; I cannot ſtir a Foot from you; thoſe two Enquiries are both ſo neceſſary at all times, and ſo peculiarly ſeaſonable at this time, that I ſhould neglect my ſelf as well as you, if I ſhould not be willing to conſider of them with you; and it's Pity we have not time more fully to treat of them.

Of Stability in Religion.

But I pray, in the firſt Place, let me know what you mean by Stability in Religion? Would you have a Man be peremptory in his Judgment, and unmoveable from his firſt Perſuaſions, whatever they were? Do you think it unlawful, or diſhonourable for a Man ever to change his Opinion in Religion? This, methinks, is no better than a Reſolution, never to be wiſer than a Man is at preſent; nay, to be always a Child, and never to outgrow his youthful Prejudices and Follies: You know it is the hard Fortune of ſome Men to have been ill educated, and to

What is meant by Stability and Conſtancy in Religion.

have

have had bad Principles inſtilled into them in their injudicious Years; and it cannot be imputed to ſuch Men as a vicious Levity, or Inconſtancy, but a very virtuous and commendable thing, upon maturer Judgment to diſcard ſuch old Wives Fables or juvenile Fancies.

Phil. No, *Sebaſtian*, I do not think the Minds of Men ſhould be after the manner of uninhabited Lands, and become *primi occupantis*; nor do I call Perſeverance in an Error Stability, but Stubbornneſs and Obſtinacy. The meaning of my firſt Queſtion therefore is only how a Man ſhall be enabled to ſtand firm and right to the Truth of chriſtian Religion, that whereof his Judgment is convinced by good Reaſon, and whereof he hath had good Proof and Experience; ſo that he ſhall neither be always trying and ſeeking, and diſputing and doubting on the one Hand, nor on the other in Danger to be hector'd out of his Conſcience by any Terror, nor wheedled and complemented out of it by Flattery and Inſinuation; that no Example of great Men, or of the Multitude, may biaſs him, nor Sophiſtry of cunning Men cheat him of his Religion, no atheiſtical Perſon droll or rally him out of it, nor Scurrility make him aſham'd of it.

Sebaſt. I did not doubt but that was your meaning, and (as I ſaid before) that is a very weighty and important Queſtion, both in Reſpect of the many Temptations that may at ſome times eſpecially put a Man's Conſtancy hard to it; and in Reſpect alſo of the Miſchief of yielding, or being baffled in that particular.

The Temptations and Dangers of this kind (as you have well intimated) are many: For a Man may be either undermined by Policy, or battered by plain Force; he may be wheedled by Complements, or born down by Authority; impoſed up-

on by rhetorical Flouriſhes, or circumvented by Sophiſtry; or ſome Man may indulge his Curioſity to try all things, who hath neither the Judgment to diſcern, nor the Courage to hold faſt that which is beſt.

The Miſchiefs of Levity and Inconſtancy in Religion.

And on the other ſide, the Miſchief of yielding in this Caſe, or of forgoing the Truth (by what means ſoever it be) is very great. For doubtleſs divine Truth, eſpecially that of the Goſpel, is a very great *depoſitum*, a mighty Truſt which God hath repoſed in us; and he that is falſe to it, and either ſoftly or ſillily delivers it up, is a Traytor both againſt God and his own Soul.

He ſins againſt God ungratefully undervaluing ſo great a Bleſſing as the Knowledge of true Religion, and playing faſt and looſe with it, as if the Goſpel was fit only to ſerve a turn.

And he intolerably wrongs and cheats himſelf, abandoning the only effectual Principles of true Piety, and the means of improving himſelf to a Capacity of eternal Happineſs. For it is a mighty Miſtake (as I have noted before) for a Man to think that all Religions are alike, or that ſo a Man be true to any Principles, the Purſuit of them will bring him to Heaven.

It is true, ſometimes Men are better than their Opinions, as we ſee amongſt the ſeveral Sorts of deluded Sectaries: There are ſome which we cannot but in Charity judge to be good Men, but then it muſt be when the Miſtake is only in ſome Notion or inconſiderable Tenets, and when otherwiſe they are right for the main; but where the Error is fundamental, or in the ſubſtantial Part of Religion, then the very Sinews of Piety are cut, and a Man's Zeal in ſuch a Caſe will be wild and fruitleſs. For as in Nature, it is impoſſible for Wa-

ter

ter to riſe higher than its Source or Fountain; ſo it ſeems to be (at leaſt next to) impoſſible in Morality, that a Man ſhould be better than his Principles. Therefore ſaith our Saviour, *Either make the Tree good and his Fruit good, or the Tree corrupt and his Fruit corrupt; for a corrupt Tree cannot bring forth good Fruit*, &c. Mat. 12. 33. And again, *if the Light that is in thee be Darkneſs, how great is that Darkneſs?* Mat. 6. 23. As if he had ſaid, "It "is true, a Man may *hold the Truth in Un-* "*righteouſneſs*, and be worſe in his Life than the "Principles of his Mind and Conſcience did re- "quire; but if a Man's Principles themſelves be "nought, and if he have embraced a bad Religion "what good can be expected from him?" Therefore, I ſay, a Man horribly cheats his own Soul, who upon any Pretence, or under any Temptation whatſoever, forſakes or blanches the true Principles of Religion.

Nay farther, I think it worth the obſerving that the very Unſettledneſs of a Man's Mind, if it be but in mere Opinion, and although he ſhould all the while keep cloſe to the great Principles of Religion, is a great Impediment to the Growth of Piety and Virtue. For as we ſee a Tree, by being often removed (although it ſhould be ſtill to a better Soil) is hinder'd both in its Growth and Fruitfulneſs; ſo we find by Experience, that thoſe who are the moſt buſy Diſputers, and who moſt affect Novelty and Change of Opinions, do little more than make a noiſe or ſhew in the World, but are ſo far from Improvement in their Lives and Tempers, that contrariwiſe they grow apparently more paſſionate, proud, ambitious, cenſorious and ſchiſmatical.

But to be ſure, he that is facile and unreſolved in his Principles, and of a ductile Conſcience, ſhall

ſhall never be able to do any Honour to his Religion or to himſelf.

As for his Religion: Who ſhall perſuade me to be of his Principles, whom I perceive to be unreſolved of them himſelf?

And for the Eſteem of his Perſon that is mutable, this will be his Fate, that he ſhall be ſcorned as a Renegado by thoſe very Men that at the ſame time glory in having made him a Proſelyte. All which things (and a great many more, which I need not mention to you) do effectually recommend Stability and Conſtancy in Religion.

Phil. I am well aware of the Truth of what you ſay, and thereupon I do the more earneſtly intreat you to give me your Advice in the Caſe, that I may continue ſtanch and ſtable againſt all the Aſſailants of my Religion, and ſo avoid all the Miſchiefs you have given me warning of, as conſequent of Levity and Changing.

Sebaſt. It is not ſo difficult to give Advice in this Caſe (and that ſuch as would effectually do the Buſineſs too) as it is hard to find Men that ask for it in earneſt and with Intention to follow it: For ſome, as I told you before, think it a very indifferent thing what Religion they are of, ſo they have any thing that is called by that Name, at leaſt if it be Chriſtian, and they can ſee the Appearance of a Church, and the Ceremonies and Appendages of Religion amongſt them.

And ſome are ſo ſilly as to think there is no Change made if they have but the old Names of things left them; like the *Romans* in their degenerate times, that ſuffered themſelves to be tamely wheedled out of their ancient Liberty, ſo long as the Name of a Commonwealth, and a few o-

ther

ther Terms of Art were retained. Such Men will take braſs Money for good Pay, if they ſee but the uſual Face and Inſcription upon it, and you may ſafely ſteal away their Gooſe if you ſtick but down a Feather in the room of it. Some are ſo childiſhly fond of Pomp and Ceremony, that if there appear more of that than ordinary, they will believe Religion to be only improved and not changed.

Some again have ſuch a ſickly longing after Novelty, that they will be always making Experiments though it be at the Hazard of their own Souls; and ſome love their Religion well enough if it coſt them nothing: But they will run no Hazards for it. And in fine, there are others that think it a wiſe thing to ſacrifice a Conſcience to gain a potent Friend, and a goodly Purchaſe to buy the preſent World with the Loſs of that which is to come.

But I am ſatisfied of the Sincerity of your Temper, and therefore in Anſwer to your Demand, I recommend to you theſe three or four things.

Directions for the keeping Men ſtable in the true Religion.

1. In the firſt Place, you know that your Religion, I mean that which you have been trained up in by the Church of *England*, and which you have always profeſſed, is a ſcriptural Religion, *i. e.* ſuch an one as hath not merely preſcribed for it ſelf by Cuſtom (though it be certainly elder than thoſe that do ſo) nor derived it ſelf from that headleſs Monſter, unaccountable Tradition, no nor yet from the Subtilty of humane Philoſophy (though it have more Reaſon to plead for it ſelf than any other) but hath taken its Riſe from holy Scripture and divine Revelation, and conſequently as it is to be proved, ſo it is to be

be diſproved thence, or nothing can be ſaid to the Purpoſe againſt it.

1. *Keep cloſe to the Holy Scriptures.*

Therefore my firſt Advice is, that you ſtudy the Holy Scripture diligently, and ſtick cloſe to that; that, as St. *Paul* hath aſſured us, *is given by Inſpiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs, that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed for all good Works*, 2 Tim. 3. 16. and from thence a Man *may be able to give a Reaſon of the Hope that is in him*, 1 *Pet.* 3. 15. *i. e.* make a ſufficient Apology for, and Defence of his Religion.

I do not mean hereby, either altogether to evacuate the Authority of laudable Cuſtom in ſome certain Caſes; or much leſs, that either Tradition or humane Learning was to be ſlighted; nor leaſt of all, that the Scripture was ſo far a Meaſure of our Practice, as that every thing became unlawful and not to be admitted in Practice, which is not to be proved by expreſs Scripture.

For God ſuppoſed us to be Men of Underſtanding when he gave us divine Revelation, and thought fit to leave ſome Circumſtances of things to be defined by human Prudence.

But this I think is certain, that if we pretend our Religion to be derived from Scripture, we muſt then admit nothing which is contrary to that Rule, no nor account any thing to be eſſential to it which that hath not provided for.

For as it could not ſtand with the divine Wiſdom to abound in Superfluities, or to give expreſs Directions for what was ſufficiently provided for before; ſo neither could it conſiſt with his Goodneſs to provide a Rule which was defective in Neceſſaries.

And this I think (by the Way) was the prime Excel-

Excellency of the Reformation, that (although ſome things perhaps might be erroneous, and many things imperfect in it) yet it revived the true Canon of chriſtian Religion, the Holy Scripture, and ſo put into Men's Hands an eaſy and certain Rule to go by; for beſides other Advantages of this Rule; it ſets us upon even Ground with the moſt cunning Adverſaries, and forces them to play upon the ſquare with us. Foraſmuch as this (as to the main Lines of it) is fitted for all Capacities, that every Man may ſee the Grounds of his Religion.

As for Example, if any Man ſhould perſuade me to worſhip an Idol, or to worſhip the true God by and under an Image, let ſuch a Man uſe all the Art and Sophiſtry he can, he will never be able to impoſe upon him that ſtudies and ſtick to the Holy Scriptures.

Or if another ſhould go about to perſuade me there was an eaſier and ſhorter Way to Heaven than by an holy Life, and that there might be either Diſtinctions or Diſpenſation, or ſome Way or other of Commutation found out which would excuſe me that Trouble, and do my Buſineſs as well: I can never be cheated into ſuch a Perſuaſion, whilſt I conſult the Holy Scripture, which is as plain and as full as can be deſired in both thoſe Caſes: Therefore, as I ſaid, ſtick cloſe to the Holy Scripture, as you deſire to hold your Religion.

2. *Make uſe of our ſpiritual Guides.*

2. But if it ſhall happen that either any thing in the Scripture ſhould ſeem ſo obſcure, or that the Sophiſtry of cunning Men ſhould caſt ſuch a Miſt before us that we are not able to determine our ſelves what to do: Then, in the ſecond Place, we are to reſort to our ſpiritual Guides, which

which God hath ſet over us, who have baptized us into, and trained us up in our Religion, to help us out.

This is alſo a means of Stability of God's own appointing: for the Apoſtle hath told us that God hath erected thoſe Orders of Men in his Church, that we ſhould *not be as Children toſs'd to and fro by every Wind of Doctrine, and by the cunning craftineſs of Men who lie in wait to deceive*, Epheſ. 4. 14. And theſe having made it their whole buſineſs and ſtudy to be fit for their Office, and to be acquainted with the *Depths of Satan*, as well as the Myſtery of Chriſtianity; I mean, to be able to detect the Frauds and Sophiſtry of Deceivers, as well as to underſtand and explicate the Holy Scripture, and the deep Points of Religion, and being alſo ordinarily to be preſumed, Men of Prudence and Experience, it muſt needs be very fit that theſe ſhould be conſulted and hearkened to with reverence, eſpecially by thoſe that have been deſtitute of the aforeſaid Advantages; and it is very unreaſonable that any Man ſhould make ſo great a Change as that of his Religion is, without the beſt advice, and moſt mature Deliberation of this kind.

And this is eſpecially to be heeded in this preſent Age, when ſuch crafty Gameſters are abroad that uſe ſuch Legerdemain, and to cogg the Die (as the Apoſtle's Phraſe imports in the fore-mentioned place) when, I ſay, there is *ſuch Fox-like Craft, and ſuch methods of Deceit* to gain Proſelytes, that the neglect of this Caution ſeems to be the principal defect and danger of the Members of this Church. The Men of other perſuaſions follow their Guides with an implicit Faith and a blind Obedience, and are ſcarce permitted the uſe of their reaſon, or to chuſe for themſelves even in the

the moſt indifferent things. And if we will not uſe ſo much Deference to our Paſtors as to think they may ſee farther than we in controverted Caſes; we ſhall be in danger to hold our Religion no longer than till we ſhall be briskly aſſaulted.

3. He that would be ſtable in his Religion, muſt learn to contemn the preſent World, without which both the former advices will be utterly inſignificant for his Security againſt Apoſtaſie. If a Man have the preſent World in admiration, it will dazle his Eyes, blind his Judgment, prejudice his Mind, bribe his Affections, and debauch his Conſcience; for it cannot be but Religion, and the things of another World, muſt be cheap with him that over-values the preſent.

3. *Contempt of the World is neceſſary to Stability in Religion.*

Judas, we know, ſold our Saviour at the vile rate of thirty pieces of Silver; but Preferment and Honour, Wealth and Glory, are ſo great Motives, that the Devil had the confidence to hope to prevail upon our Saviour himſelf to fall down and worſhip him, when he *ſhewed him the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them*, and offered them to him at that price.

To ſwim in Pleaſure, flow with Wealth, and be at the top of the World in Glory, what will not this do with unmortified Hearts? Such Men in ſuch a caſe will (it may be) at firſt ſtrain Curteſie with Conſcience, and find out a thouſand Shifts and Diſtinctions to excuſe themſelves; but rather than fail (and if that will not do) they will cut the knot they cannot untie, and rudely break with Conſcience, rather than withſtand ſo great Allurements.

Therefore, *Philander*, if you and I would ſtick faſt to our Principles, we muſt ſit ſomewhat looſe to the World, we muſt entertain no great Opinion

nion concerning Wealth and Honour, but be content with little things for the preſent, and comfort our ſelves with the Expectation of great ones in another World. We muſt conſider with our ſelves how vain and empty thoſe things are, even in this Life, and whilſt they are enjoy'd, and eſpecially how perfectly they vaniſh, and are of no avail at all at the Day of Judgment: *We muſt look at the things which are not ſeen, and are Eternal, the crown of Life*, 2 Cor. 4. *ult.* (I mean) which God hath prepared for all *thoſe that are faithful to the Death*; Rev. 2. 10. Then ſhall we be ſtable as the centre of the Earth, unchangeable as the Heavens, brave and couragious, ſo as to ſcorn Allurements, contemn Danger, and be true to our real Intereſt, our Conſcience, our God, and our Religion.

4. Fervent and conſtant Prayer to God.

4. If eſpecially to all theſe, in the laſt place, we join fervent and conſtant Prayer to God: for we are not to truſt our ſelves, but commend to him the fixing our Minds and eſtabliſhing our Hearts. He made and knows them, and he only can confirm and ſtrengthen them againſt all the temptations of the Devil; he can provide that we ſhall not *be led into temptation*, or however, *that no temptation ſhall overtake us but what we ſhall be able to bear*; he can deliver us from all the ſnares that ſhall be laid for us, and help us to elude all Sophiſtry; and, in a word, can upon Emergency, and in the very nick of time, beſtow *upon us ſuch a ſpirit and wiſdom as none of our adverſaries ſhall be able to withſtand*, Luke 21. 15.

Theſe, *Philander*, are the moſt effectual things I can think of for the preſent, in anſwer to your firſt Queſtion.

Phil. I thank you heartily, *Sebaſtian*, for the great Satisfaction you have given me, and I ſhall make it both my own care, and the Matter of my Prayer

Prayer to God, that neither the levity of my own Mind, nor the importunity of others, ſhall tempt me from the good old way of the Church of *England*, and that neither any effort of Wit or Power, the blandiſhments of Proſperity, nor the ſtorms of Adverſity, ſhall ſtagger my Reſolution.

And now, becauſe I would not be troubleſome to you too long, be pleaſed, as briefly as the Caſe will bear, to reſolve me alſo in my ſecond inquiry, namely, by what means I may maintain a conſtant chearfulneſs of Spirit in the courſe of Chriſtianity. You made it evident at the beginning of this preſent Conference, that there is ſuch a thing attainable, and you will not wonder that I am inquiſitive after ſo ineſtimable a good: And the rather becauſe (it is in vain to be aſhamed to tell you what you cannot but have obſerved your ſelf in me) for my own part, though I am ſometimes very comfortable, and now and then as full of Joy as my Heart can hold, yet at other times (whether it be occaſioned by any error of my Life, or by the effect of my Conſtitution of Body, or the weakneſs of my Mind I cannot tell) it is quite otherwiſe with me, and my Spirits ſink as low as they were high before. Now therefore give me your advice how I may maintain an even temper of chearfulneſs, ſo that I may neither ſeem to be Infidel nor Enthuſiaſt, neither diſparage the Power of Religion by meanneſs of Spirit, nor rendring it ſuſpected to be merely the acting of a part by my over-doing and pretending to too high flights of Joy.

Inquiry by what means a Man may maintain an even temper of ſpiritual comfort.

Sebaſt. This ſecond Inquiry of yours, *Philander*, is no leſs uſeful than the former, for (as you have well intimated) not only the happineſs of a

Man's own Life depends upon it, but the Reputation of Religion it ſelf is very much concerned in the Temper of Spirit which he expreſſes under it. For what Stranger to Religion would not be afraid of it that obſerves the melancholy Complaints, the perpetual Scruples, the doleful Sighs and diſmal Countenances of ſome that pretend to it? And on the other Hand; what ſober Man would not take it to be an enthuſiaſtick Frenzy, when he obſerves Men to be wrapt up into the third Heaven (at leaſt in their own Conceit) but can give no rational Account of it? And again, what wiſe Man ſhall obſerve the Uncertainty of Men's Temper in this reſpect, and not ſuſpect whether that can have any ſolid Foundation it ſelf, whoſe Effects are ſo volatile and inconſtant.

This being the Conſequence of the Caſe, it is very fit it ſhould be provided for accordingly. Now though what I have ſaid already, whilſt I was anſwering *Biophilus*'s Objections againſt the Comfortableneſs of Religion, will in a good meaſure come up to this Point, eſpecially if you lay all thoſe things together which were occaſionally ſcattered through that Diſpute; yet for your Satisfaction, as well as for the Importance of the Matter, I will not grudge the Pains to reſume that Subject, and give you my Thoughts more fully and directly now, which before I did only briefly and by the bye.

Now in order to the determining of the Method and Means of ſettled Peace and an even Temper of ſpiritual Comfort, it is neceſſary that we diſcover the ſeveral Cauſes of the Interruption thereof, and when we have found them, if we can apply proper and peculiar Remedies to each of them, then we ſhall do your Buſineſs.

As

As for the former, *viz.* the Cauſes of the Unevenneſs of a Chriſtian's Spirit, or the Interruptions of his ſpiritual Comfort, they are eaſily found out, and I do not doubt but they may be reckoned to be theſe five following:

Namely, either, 1. Unevenneſs and Irregularity of Life. Or,

2. Undue Apprehenſions of God. Or,

3. Miſtake of the Terms of the Goſpel. Or,

4. Sad Accidents externally. Or,

5. Melancholy of Body.

A conſtant and even Courſe of Piety is the firſt and principal means of a conſtant and even Temper of Heart.

1. In the firſt Place, I account the Irregularity of Men's Lives to be a very common and the moſt ordinary Cauſe of the Unevenneſs of their Comfort.

All virtuous Actions have naturally Peace and Tranquillity belonging to them; for, beſides the pleaſant Air of good Reputation that attends them, and that a Man who hath the leaſt Value for Applauſe that can be, is, notwithſtanding, inſenſibly made more chearful by it, it is a great deal more to have a Man's own Conſcience approve him, and eſpecially when he conſiders that he doth what God is well pleaſed with, and that which he will not fail one way or other to give Teſtimony to, and ſhew his Approbation of.

On the contrary, all vicious Actions are naturally uncomfortable; for beſides the Infamy that attends them, they have Guilt inſeparably adheres to them; and God's Diſpleaſure entailed upon them. For as he can never either hate Virtue or love Vice without a flat Contradiction to his own Nature, ſo neither can he or will he frown upon the one, or ſhine upon the other.

Now therefore if a Man be habitually vicious, he muſt needs be habitually ſad and miſerable, (without that more miſerable and ſordid Refuge, Drunkenneſs, that filthy Doſe for the Gripes of Conſcience.) And if a Man be habitually good and holy, and maintains a conſtant Courſe of Piety and virtuous Actions, he will be habitually comfortable, and under a conſtant Ray of Light and Glory. But if a Man be up and down in his Life, ſometimes good and ſometimes bad, or at leaſt ſometimes brave and generous, and at other times flat and careleſs, he cannot expect that his Comforts ſhould be more conſtant than he himſelf is; for the Effects muſt follow the Condition of their Cauſes.

In this Caſe therefore the Diſeaſe leads to the Remedy, he that would maintain an even Temper of Peace in his Conſcience, muſt be ſure to maintain an even Courſe of Virtue and Piety in his Life. For it is not only impoſſible to ſecure the former without the latter, but it is ridiculous to pretend to it; nay farther, if it ſhould happen that any Man found his Heart chearful extraordinarily upon other Terms, he would have juſt Cauſe to ſuſpect a Deluſion of the Devil.

God is conſtantly of the ſame Mind, Religion and the Terms of Happineſs are conſtant and ſettled, therefore there can be no Way to conſtant Comfort in the one, or Hopes in the other, but by being conſtant to our ſelves and to our Duty; nor can there be any Cauſe of Uncertainty, but the Unſettledneſs of our own Hearts. But if a Man live ſo, as that it become matter of difficult Diſpute whether he be a good Man or no, it muſt needs be much more ſo, whether he ſhall go to Heaven or no, and then I think it is out of Diſpute, whether ſuch a Man can be comfortable or not. Let the

the Man therefore that aims at a ſettled Peace, be ſure to be conſtant and thorough-paced in his Duty, that it become not only a Biaſs upon him, but the very Method and Habit of his Life; and let fooliſh People, if they will, call this Formality and a Road of Religion, for if it be a Road, it is certainly the narrow one that leads to Life; for never is Religion as it ſhould be, till it becomes thus natural and habitual. Yet leſt any Man ſhould by Reaſon of the Eaſineſs of this State when it is arrived at, interpret it to be but Formality, let him withal embrace all Opportunities of doing not only ſtrictly neceſſary Duties, but brave and generous Actions, that ſo he may demonſtrate Zeal as well as Conſtancy, and an Ardency of Affection to God and Goodneſs; and he that takes this Courſe, ſhall effectually ſecure himſelf againſt the firſt Cauſe of Uncomfortableneſs.

Right Notions of God is the next Step to ſettled Peace.

2. The ſecond Cauſe of ſpiritual Dejection I reckoned to be undue Apprehenſions of God, and this generally goes a great Way in the Diſquiets and Diſorders of moſt well-meaning but weak People. For whereas, if things be rightly conſidered, the very firſt Notion of a God is an everlaſting Spring of Hope, and the right Underſtanding of his Goodneſs is the great Sweetner of a Man's Spirits, and that which principally diſpoſes him to Chearfulneſs; it is common with weak or deluded People either to receive ſuch Impreſſions from others, or ignorantly to frame ſuch an Image of God in their own Minds as they muſt eternally hate, but cannot poſſibly love. And if the Thoughts of God be unpleaſant to them, it muſt needs follow that all the Duties of Religion muſt go on heavily, and when they have done, their Hopes muſt be flat, and all about them looks melancholy.

The principal thing I aim at in this Place, is when Men have ſuch a Notion of God as renders his Actions as neceſſary as his Nature, and becauſe (as I have ſhewed to *Biophilus*) he was from Eternity, and could not but be, therefore they conceit he cannot but do whatſoever is done as neceſſarily as he exiſts; and ſo unawares they ſet a ſurly and rigid Fate over themſelves inſtead of a wiſe and good God. For in purſuance of this Notion they conclude he muſt be juſt to Extremity, and that he is bound to vindicate himſelf rigorouſly, ſo that he cannot abate or remit of his own Right, but muſt exact the utmoſt Farthing; and on the other ſide, they fanſy that he cannot but do all the Good he doth, and muſt upon Neceſſity of Nature make all the Expreſſions of Kindneſs that are poſſible.

The former of theſe is very horrible; for (tho' in one Reſpect it renders God leſs than a Man, for we both can and ought in many Caſes to recede from our own right, yet upon the whole) it muſt needs be an hard Chapter, nay a moſt killing Conſideration to ſuch imperfect and guilty Creatures as we are, to think our ſelves under a God that cannot pardon properly; that can paſs no Act of Grace, but muſt rigidly exact his Right one way or other: For then what can my Prayers and Tears, and Repentance, and even Reformation it ſelf ſignify? And though there be a Mediator and a Satisfaction ſpoken of in the Goſpel, yet the Apprehenſion of ſuch a ſupreme Being is able to render even that Remedy ſuſpicious, or however to make a Man's Heart ake and tremble all the Days of his Life; but to be ſure he can take no Delight in God, whatever Hopes he may have in a Saviour.

And

And then, on the other ſide, the Apprehenſion of the Neceſſity of the Acts of divine Goodneſs renders him as contemptible as the former made him terrible. For who can think himſelf bound to love and thank him for that which he could not chuſe but do? And beſides, this renders all Prayers and Addreſſes to ſuch a God as fruitleſs as the other. For what need I pray to him that cannot do otherwiſe than he doth?

But the Miſtake all this while lies here; neither of theſe ſorts of Men conſider that God is a free Agent, and conſequently though he cannot chuſe but be juſt and righteous in all his Dealings, yet he is bound by nothing but his own good Pleaſure to exerciſe ſuch or ſuch Inſtances of Juſtice. He may puniſh or he may pardon upon what Terms he pleaſes, and ſo far as he pleaſes; *he hath Mercy becauſe he will have Mercy, and becauſe Mercy pleaſes him:* And ſo for his Goodneſs, though he is infinitely full and perfect, and conſequently delights to communicate himſelf to his Creatures, yet all the Inſtances and Expreſſions of it are free and voluntary; he is not bound to do ſuch things merely becauſe they are good in the general, but accordingly as his own Wiſdom directs him, and as they ſhall ſerve the Ends of that in particular. And then every good Man that lives under theſe Apprehenſions may be generouſly comfortable, and neither be tempted to deſpiſe God as a ſoft and good natur'd Being, on the one ſide, nor to be horribly afraid of him, and hate him on the other.

Right Apprehenſion of the Temper and Demand of the Goſpel is another means of ſettled Peace.

3. Another Cauſe of Uncomfortableneſs is, when Men do not rightly underſtand the Terms of the Goſpel, but either miſtake the Opinions and Tradi-

tions of Men for the Definitions of God, or at leaſt confound what God deſigns to bring us up to by the Goſpel as a State of Perfection, with what he ſtrictly requires and inſiſts upon as the Conditions of Salvation. Hence it comes to paſs that they are not able to make any good Judgment of their own Eſtate, but are either apt to comply with the Flatteries of their own Hearts, and pronounce Comfort to themſelves upon too looſe Terms; or on the other ſide, to yield to their own Melancholy by too ſevere and rigid a Cenſure of themſelves; or laſtly, will waver between both, according as they meet with a new Book, a new Saying, or an unuſual Accident, and ſo be by Fits ſad or chearful as it happens.

Now for this, it is to be conſidered, that tho' the Goſpel ſometimes ſeems to be very ſtrict and ſevere, or at leaſt very accurate in its Preſcriptions, which it doth partly for the Honour and Perfection of that Religion, partly by that means to ſcrew us up to as high a Pitch as poſſible; for it is certain if our Copy or Rule ſhould be low and mean, our Endeavours would be ſlacken'd, and our Performances would fall ſo very ſhort, that we ſhould not be tolerable Chriſtians: Again, on the other ſide, though the ſame Goſpel at other times ſpeaks very condeſcendingly, and ſeems to make ſo great Allowances to human Infirmity, as if it was a very eaſy Matter to be ſaved; and this it doth to encourage eſpecially Men of melancholy and dejected Tempers, and to bear them up againſt the ſad Reflexions they are apt to make either upon their former Sins, or their daily Infirmities.

Yet all this while God is of one Mind, and the New Teſtament hath a determinate Senſe:

Namely, That whatſoever ſhall give Evidence of a Man's Sincerity, *i. e.* that he hath a Principle

ciple of divine Life in him, and a true Love of God and Goodneſs, this ſhall be ſufficient to his Salvation; and as nothing leſs than this ſhall be accepted, ſo nothing more is indiſpenſably required.

For the Salvation or Damnation of Men depends not upon Punctilio's or nice Points of Diſpute, as if God had a Mind by the means of a ſubtil Interpretation to ſave and damn Men arbitrarily: Therefore he lays no Streſs upon their being, or not being of ſuch an Opinion, nor takes the Advantage of a Ceremony under or over; for the Apoſtle hath told us, *That the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteouſneſs, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, Rom. 14. 17. And again, *That neither Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor Uncircumciſion, but a new Creature*, Gal. 6. 15.

Nay, it is true alſo that God decides not Men's final Eſtate (one Way or other) merely upon the Account of ſuch Duties performed, or ſuch Sins committed: But that which he principally looks at in this Caſe is an ingenuous or diſingenuous Temper towards himſelf, and a Capacity or Fitneſs for the ſtate of Heaven on the one ſide, and a Temper and Diſpoſition fit for Hell and the Devil on the other.

That (I ſay) which God expreſſly requires as the Condition of Salvation, is an Habit and Temper of Obedience, and an ingenuous Frame of Heart towards Himſelf and his Laws. And that this is not to be eſtimated arithmetically, or by tale of ſuch a Number of Performances, but rather geometrically, in Proportion to the Heartineſs and Sincerity of the Man, and with Reſpect to the Circumſtances he ſtands in; that is, as well making Allowance for his Temptations, Afflictions, Ignorances, Infirmities and Surpriſals, as raiſing the Reckoning

Reckoning in Conſideration of extraordinary Light, Knowledge, Opportunities, Encouragements, and Advantages whatſoever. Accordingly we find the Apoſtle to make a Suppoſition, that a Man *may give all his Goods to feed the poor, and his Body to be burnt alſo, and yet want Charity* and the Love of God, 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. And yet our Saviour on the other Hand tells us, that *whoſoever ſhall give a cup of cold water only to a Diſciple, ſhall not loſe his reward*, Mat. 10. 42.

So that (as I ſaid) ſincerity is the only thing in Queſtion, eſpecially as to the buſineſs of a conſtant and even Temper of ſpiritual Peace. Now that is eaſie to be decided, and a Man needs not to run himſelf into nice Diſputes, endleſs Scruples and Perplexities about it; for whoſoever endeavours to live well according to the Goſpel, will eaſily be ſenſible of his own ſincerity. For as it is no hard Matter for a Man to know concerning himſelf, whether he hath carried himſelf faithfully towards his Friend, or with a filial Reverence towards his Father, and he may as eaſily tell whether he hath dealt treacherouſly with the one, or been ſtubborn, and careleſs of offending the other; and accordingly (if they be wiſe and worthy Perſons he hath to deal with) he may aſſure himſelf of the love of the former, and of the paternal affection of the latter, notwithſtanding that poſſibly he may be conſcious to himſelf to have done ſome things unadviſedly, and to have failed in Circumſtances towards them both: So I ſee no reaſon to doubt but that upon the ſame terms a Man may be able to witneſs to himſelf his own integrity and ſimplicity towards God, his trueſt Friend, and moſt affectionate Father, and thereupon look cheerfully up to him as ſuch, and walk comfortably before him, eſpecially having ſo good aſſurance, (as I ſhewed before) that he is far from being a captious Deity.

4. Again

4. Again, there is a Fourth very common occaſion of uncomfortableneſs, namely, the grievance of external Accidents and Calamities, which may and do frequently befal the beſt Men, and which either by their ſharpneſs diſcompoſe a Chriſtian, or by the multitude and ſeverity of them may tempt him to queſtion how he ſtands in the favour of God who permits ſuch things to befal him, or at leaſt by their often and yet uncertain Returns may make the Pulſe of his Heart beat very unequally.

Faith in God againſt all Accidents and outward Afflictions another means of conſtant Peace and comfort.

Againſt this there is no more proper Remedy than to rouſe up our ſelves, and to act a generous Faith in God.

Conſidering, in the firſt place, that this is his uſual method with thoſe he loves beſt, to exerciſe them with Affliction, and that Affliction is ſo far from being a Token of his Hatred, that on the contrary, there is no more dangerous ſign of God's having quite deſerted and abandoned a Man, than for him to uſe no Chaſtiſement toward him. *If ye receive not Chaſtiſement*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *ye are Baſtards, and not Sons.* And therefore we ſee the very Eternal Son of God, when he came upon Earth and was in our Nature, was the moſt remarkable Inſtance of a *Man of Sorrows* that ever was in the World; inſomuch that it is not eaſie to imagine what Calamity can befal any Man which is not to be parallelled, if not exceeded in the Sufferings of our Saviour, and as if God had order'd it ſo on purpoſe to this end, that no Man might complain of his ſhare, or eſpecially deſpair, and think himſelf forſaken of God becauſe of his Adverſities.

And

And then in the ſecond place, aſſuring our ſelves, that as all Afflictions come from God, ſo they ſhall *certainly be made to work for good to all thoſe that love him*, Rom. 8. 28. For unleſs we humour our ſelves, and indulge our Paſſion too much, we may diſcover that there is hardly any Affliction befalls but what we may be bettered by, even for the preſent if we will; but there can be no doubt but God both can and will turn it to our Advantage in the iſſue and upſhot of things: And therefore we have no reaſon to be too much dejected upon ſuch an occaſion.

But that which is to be the principal exerciſe of our Faith in ſuch a caſe, and of moſt effectual Conſideration, is, That God hath provided another World, and an Eſtate of unmixed and uninterrupted Joy there, when this ſhort and troubleſome Life is ended. And if we fix our thoughts there (which we have great Reaſon to do, conſidering the Happineſs is ſo unſpeakably great, the Certainty of it is ſo full, and the time ſo ſhort for the accompliſhment of it) we ſhall then count *all the ſufferings of the preſent not worthy to be compared with the Glory that ſhall then be revealed*, Rom. viii. 18. And be far from fainting under the ſharpeſt of Adverſities, *whilſt thus we look not at the things which are ſeen, and are but temporal, but at the things which are not ſeen, and are eternal*, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

Advice in the caſe of bodily melancholy.

5. But fifthly and laſtly, the moſt general cauſe of the uncomfortableneſs of the Spirits of pious Men, and of the unevenneſs of their Temper, is bodily Melancholy. That black Humour is apt to diffuſe it ſelf all over, ſo as to cloud the Judgment, and taint the Eye of the

the Mind, that every thing ſhall look of its own Colour, black and diſmal, when this predominates, and at leaſt while the Fit laſts, God is dreadful, his Laws are impoſſible, the Guilt of Sin is unpardonable, and even the moſt pitiable Infirmities of Mankind (eſpecially thoſe which ſuch a Man can obſerve in himſelf) are aggravated ſo as to bear the Symptoms of Reprobation, and every Affliction is looked upon as a Forerunner of the Vengeance of Hell-fire.

Melancholy in the Body becomes Jealouſy in the Mind, and renders a Man always ſuſpicious and uneaſy, and to be continually ſearching for what he would be loth to find; he is always trying and examining his own caſe to God-ward with that Severity, as if he was deſirous to diſcover Flaws in his Hopes and Evidences of Salvation; one while he is a little revived, and ſees no Reaſon to doubt his own Eſtate, but by and by he revokes the moſt deliberate Concluſions of his own Conſcience, and then again falls into the other extreme, and is altogether in the altitudes, but always uneven and unſettled.

Now for Remedy of this, it is more than half Way of the Cure to underſtand the Diſeaſe, and yet that is no more than to be aware that Melancholy is both Cauſe and Effect, and that that alone is able to act all this Tragedy without any other Cauſe of Sadneſs and Diſquiet, than merely the Diffidence and Miſtruſt of a Man's own Temper. And that betrays it ſelf notoriouſly in this, that ſuch a Man can aſſign no Reaſon of his Trouble, but only he is troubled, and he is again troubled that he is ſo. Now if a Man could give any ſuch Account of his uncomfortable Fears as were

ſuffi-

ſufficient to ſatisfy any Man beſides himſelf, then it would be reaſonable not to charge them upon Melancholy, but upon thoſe juſt Cauſes; but if no ſuch Cauſes be aſſignable, then it is manifeſtly Temper that is in Fault without Guilt or Danger; and this one thing conſidered is able to relieve a Man out of his Perplexity, and his Mind may arrive at ſome tolerable Meaſure of Chearfulneſs, even in the midſt of this bodily Infirmity.

But if the Underſtanding of ſuch a Man be too weak, or the Diſeaſe of Melancholy be too ſtrong upon him to be cured this Way; then the next thing to be done (after the Uſe of Phyſick for the Body) is to reſort to ſome able and experienc'd Phyſician of Souls, and ſincerely to lay open the State of his Conſcience to him: And having ſo done, to reſt upon the Judgment of that other Perſon, ſeeing he is not able to judge for himſelf, or not willing to rely upon his own Judgment. And this is not only a Way of preſent Relief, but very ſafe and reaſonable, and can have no ſuch thing as an implicit Faith imputed to it. For ſo long as the perplexed Perſon can give any Reaſon of his Doubts and Fears, ſo long the ſpiritual Guide is bound to give Satisfaction to his Reaſon, and to anſwer the juſt Cauſes of his Trouble; but when that is done, and the poor Man is perplexed without Cauſe, it is apparent there is nothing but Melancholy in the Caſe, and then nothing can be more fit and proper than that the weak ſhould lean upon the ſtrong, and this poor diſtreſſed Creature ſhould ſupport himſelf by the Authority of God's Miniſter, who muſt be ſuppoſed to be able to judge in ſuch a Caſe, and cannot be ſuſpected to be partial, becauſe he hath no Intereſt to ſerve by ſo doing.

And

And farther the more effectually to relieve ſuch a pitiable Perſon, it ſeems very neceſſary that after due Preparation thereunto, and all fit Solemnity, the Man of God ſhould proceed to a particular Abſolution of his Patient, not only to aſſure him of the good Grounds he went upon in the Judgment he gave of his Eſtate before, but to raiſe his Spirits by the Sacredneſs of the Action, and the Hopes that God will ratify in Heaven what is thus done on Earth by his Miniſter. This Courſe is recommended by our Church as a ſpecifick in ſuch Caſes, and was of conſtant Practice in the primitive Church in ſuch Extremities, inſtead of that cuſtomary, general, and formal auricular Confeſſion, which (in ignorant and corrupt Ages) came in the room of it.

After all, I would earneſtly adviſe ſuch a Man (as we ſpeak of) not to ſmother his Thoughts in his own Boſom; but by all means to let his Heart take Air; for there is hardly any ſerious Perſon ſo weak and injudicious, that a melancholy Man had not better conſult with than himſelf; nay, many times the putting a Queſtion to a Poſt or Pillar will help him to an Anſwer better than revolving of it altogether in his own Breaſt; but eſpecially it is to be recommended to him, that he give not himſelf up to Solitude and Retirement, which thickens the Blood, and feeds the Diſeaſe, but that he frequent the Company and Converſation of good Men; their Society will not only divert him, but their Chearfulneſs will refreſh him, and the very obſerving of their Infirmities will tend to his Comfort, as giving him Cauſe to ſuſpect his own Auſterity, and ſo inclining him to paſs a more mild Cenſure upon himſelf.

And thus, I think, *Philander*, I have ſatisfied your

your ſecond Enquiry, and have done it more largely than I intended, or than you expected. And now, once again, good Night.

Phil. Good Night heartily, good *Sebaſtian.*

FINIS.